# PROPHETS, PRIESTS AND PUBLICANS

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# PROPHETS, PRIESTS AND PUBLICANS

*By the same Author:*

THE GOSPELS: FACT, MYTH, OR LEGEND?

WHAT BECOMES OF THE DEAD?
A Study in Eschatology

*In Preparation:*

WHOM DO YOU SAY?
A Study in Christology

# PROPHETS, PRIESTS AND PUBLICANS

Character Sketches and Problems from the Gospels

BY

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# PREFACE

THE author is encouraged by the reception accorded to his first series of New Testament Essays, which appeared under the title, *The Gospels, Fact, Myth, or Legend?* and hereby ventures to offer a new series, which pursues the same aim and method as the previous one.

The first part, dealing with the direct defence of the Evangelists, has never before appeared in print. Chapters 1, 2, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 15 have appeared as articles in the *Catholic Gazette*. Chapters 3, 6, 7, 12 and 13, in the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, the Chapter on Hillel and Shammai in the *Catholic World*. Chapter 14 is in print for the first time.

The author thanks the Editors of the Periodicals above mentioned for their permission to reprint. In some instances the text has been slightly modified. He also wishes to thank the Rev. A. B. Sharpe, M.A., for much valuable advice, and the Rev. Bernard Grimley, Ph.D., D.D., for revising the proof sheets.
The author hopes to continue the method of defence and explanation of the New Testament, which seems to have proved useful to many.

J. P. ARENDZEN.

# PART I

## *THE CREDIBILITY OF THE GOSPELS*

# CHAPTER I

## THE PETRINE TEXT IN ST. MATTHEW

Few texts of the New Testament have been the subject of more persistent and acrimonious debate than the famous Petrine text in Chapter XVI of St. Matthew beginning : Thou art Peter, etc. Since the Reformation the obvious meaning of these words has been set aside by all those who rejected the Papacy. Whatever they meant—and there have been many suggested meanings—they could not mean what Catholics said they meant. It has been reserved for modern times to effect the most amazing and most complete change of front which is known in the history of biblical exegesis. "The words," so it is said, "obviously mean what Catholics always said they meant, and this is conclusive proof that Jesus never said them at all." Some will maintain that they were forged in the second century in favour of the Roman See, as the forger can only have been the person who has benefited by it; the author of the forgery can only have been some early Roman bishop or his entourage. Others maintain that the fraud goes further back still, in the disputes between Peter

and Paul, in the days when Paul resisted Peter to the face. Early Christians in order to account for Peter's predominance put these words on the lips of Christ, either as a matter of deliberate party politics or perhaps with less evil intent as a popular attempt to account for Simon's curious name of Petros or Stone. Simple folk, as the early Christians were, will often elaborate such little bits of popular word-play to explain names that puzzle them. They will embroider an intricate story round the sound of a name that has roused their attention and curiosity.

This latest development in criticism is not a mere speculation of armchair theologians. The present writer giving a lecture on the Papacy in a North London Church, had to face the angry remonstrances of a number of students from a neighbouring theological college of low church ideas, and was asked how he dared to quote "Tu es Petrus, etc.," as he must know they were proved to be not genuine by modern criticism. Lecturing in East London he received a tract issued by a local clergyman of most extreme Anglo-Catholic but anti-Roman views and demonstrating that Our Lord never said the words to Peter at all.

As then the historical Protestant interpretations recede into merited obscurity, it becomes more and more imperative to deal with this new problem before us. Already in 1911 Franz Dibelius, a non-Catholic scholar could write: "Hardly any critical theologian accepts this as a genuine utterance of Jesus."

We have the right to ask the grounds for this sweeping condemnation. They have been put with precision and persuasiveness by August Dell in 1914

in the *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft,* pp. 1 and 2. This we here translate for our readers:—

Through the pre-eminence described in Matthew xvi., 17-19, Peter is raised above the other disciples and this in contradiction to the other New Testament references to Peter.

1. According to Gal. ii., 9, Peter is only of "the pillars" in conjunction with John and James.
2. In the so-called Council of the Apostles, it is not Peter but James who gives the decision.
3. After the conversion of Cornelius, the Roman Centurion, Peter has to give an account in Jerusalem of his behaviour. Acts xi., 2.
4. The author of the Gospel according to John can still venture to let Peter recede into the background in comparison with the disciple whom Jesus loved, on every occasion.
5. Paul curtly blames Peter on account of his attitude to Gentile Christians. Gal. ii., 11. All this would have been impossible had Peter been given pre-eminence by Jesus.
6. Within the compass of the Four Gospels themselves the verses are like a foreign body. The pre-eminence contained in these verses does not agree with the unstable character of Peter. Immediately after his confession Peter does not understand Christ's prediction of His sufferings, and tries to keep Him back from His coming passion and has to be pushed aside with bitter words. (Mk. viii., 33.) Peter falls asleep as well as the others in the garden of Gethsemane, although Christ bids him in particular to watch. He intends not to leave Jesus, as the others did, but then denies Him

when the moment comes to confess Him. Hence this pre-eminence suits neither Peter's character nor his position whether before or after the death of Jesus.

7. So likewise, the verses Matth. xvi., 17-19, are suspicious on a critical analysis of the sources. All three Synoptics have indeed Peter's confession. Had Jesus therefore uttered these words on this occasion, they should have followed the confession in all three Gospels. The fact that they are wanting proves that they did not originate from Jesus but are an addition.
8. Moreover the occurrence of the word "ecclesia" (church) points in the same direction, for Jesus never intended to found an ecclesia and has never used the expression "church."

This imposing array of reasons, which we have numbered for the sake of clearness, are as the reader perceives all "a priori"—the verses cannot be genuine for it is antecedently unlikely that Jesus ever said such a thing.

Now, however, let us look not at theories, but at facts.

*First.* The words occur in all extant copies of St. Matthew in Greek, and in all the versions. They are contained in the Old Latin, and the Old Syriac and in the Egyptian ones; if they were ever absent, their absence has left no trace whatever either in the Greek manuscripts or in the translations, which originated in the second century. On all the principles therefore of textual criticism the words always stood in the Greek of St. Matthew. Hence no modern critical edition dares to omit them or even mark them as doubtful.

*Secondly*. There is even some direct proof that they occurred in the so-called Gospel according to the Hebrews, *i.e.*, the Jewish Gospel, which was practically the Hebrew original of St. Matthew, slightly paraphrased and with a few incidents from tradition. A marginal note to an ancient Gospel text of St. Matthew says that in the Jewish copy Simon Bar-john stood instead of Simon Bar-jonah. This surely is proof sufficient that the remainder of the text was the same as in the current Greek copies. Had part of it been omitted or altered it would have been remarked rather than the trifling variant Bar-john for Bar-jonah.

*Thirdly*. In the 22nd *Ode of Solomon* Christ's work in this world is compared to Ezechiel's raising of the dry bones, in this fashion:

"Thou hast taken the dead bones and clad them with flesh,
They were without movement and Thou gavest them vigour of life.
Thy way was without corruption and so was Thy countenance,
But the world Thou didst abandon to corruption, that all things should be undone and afterwards renewed,
That the foundation of all things should be Thy rock,
And on this (rock) Thou hast built Thy kingdom
And it has become the home of Thy saints."

No reasonable man can doubt that the singer of this ode alluded to the text: "Thou art a rock and upon this rock I will build my church, and to thee I will give the keys of the kingdom."

Now the Odes of Solomon are ascribed by some scholars to the first or to the beginning of the second

century. Only a few ascribe them to the end of the second century.

*Fourthly*. St. Justin, the Martyr, born in Samaria c. 100 A.D., in his dialogue with Trypho the Jew, written about 135 A.D., states that Christ: "Gave to one of His disciples, formerly called Simon, the surname Peter, since he, according to the revelation of the Father acknowledged him as the Son of God, the Christ." The allusion to St. Matthew's text is evident.

*Fifthly*. Tatian's Gospel harmony or *Diatessaron* dates from c. 160 A.D. The original is unfortunately lost, but Arabic, Latin and medieval Dutch translations exist. They contain the Petrine text. If it be objected that they are not direct translations as they follow the current text, they at least give us Tatian's sequence of Gospel paragraphs, and it is gratuitous to suppose that they deliberately inserted this paragraph if it was absent from their original. Moreover in the fourth century St. Ephrem wrote Syriac commentaries on Tatian's text; he never used any text but Tatian's. Yet he writes as follows: "What do men say of me that the Son of Man is? They say to him: the one says that he is Elias, the other says: he is Jeremias. But ye, what do ye say that I am? Simon the head and leader spoke: Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God. And he said: Blessed art thou Simon, the gates of hell shall not prevail against thee, that the faith be not destroyed, for what He builds, who can destroy? When He built His church a tower was built, the foundations whereof sufficed for all that was to be built upon it. The Lifegiver gave them a tower, which He raised on high. . . . Thou art a rock, said He, and that

rock He set up that Satan may dash against it." There can surely be no doubt that this Syriac preacher knew the Petrine text of St. Matthew. The same must be said of Aphraates the Persian, abbot and bishop of St. Matthew's Abbey near Mosul, who wrote between the years 337 and 345. There can therefore be no reasonable doubt that the Petrine text stood in Tatian's Gospel harmony.

*Sixthly.* Another witness for the second century is St. Irenaeus. He writes (Adv. Haer. iii., 18, 4), against the heretics of his day, who distinguished between Christ, who suffered, and the Son of God, who is immortal and impassible, and he argues: "Even the Lord Himself makes it plain, who it is that suffered. For when He had asked His disciples: Whom do men say that the Son of Man is? Peter, having answered: Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God—and having been praised by Him: 'for flesh and blood did not reveal it to him, but the Father, who is in heaven'—Peter made it plain that this Son of Man is Christ the Son of the living God. For from that time he began to show—said the evangelist—to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the priests, and suffer reproach and be crucified and rise again the third day." St. Irenaeus, though not directly concerned with Peter's dignity and office but only with the identity of the suffering Son of Man with the Christ the Son of the living God, quotes enough of St. Matthew's Gospel to show plainly that he knew of the Petrine text, for only in St. Matthew is St. Peter praised and said to have received a revelation from above.

*Seventhly.* Tertullian, born c. 160 A.D., writing as

a Catholic (De Praescr. haer xxii.) quotes virtually the whole text and later as a Montanist (De Pud.) tells us that Pope Callixtus based his claims upon this text. Tertullian rejects the claims but does not doubt the text. The same unshaken confidence in the genuineness of the text we find in Clement of Alexandria (who was born about 150 A.D.) and in the greatest Christian scholar of antiquity, Origen, who was born a generation later.

*Lastly*. About 170 A.D. Hermas, the brother of Pope Pius I, wrote a book of visions and parables, which obtained an immense vogue in the early church. Vision 3 and Parable 9 seems elaborate disquisitions on the text: "I will build My Church on a rock." The text is never verbally cited, but the writer plays round the thought that Christ is the Master builder and the Church is His secure foundation. This is so obvious that radical critics have seen in Hermas's work an early attempt to bolster up Papal pretensions, to clear up the ground for the introductions of the Petrine text in Matthew!

We need not pursue our enquiries beyond the second century, as its occurrence in the First Gospel is then beyond dispute. We know that St. Matthew was written about the year 70 of our era, that we can trace this particular text to within one or two generations of its first appearance, that the Gospel was translated into three widely-spread languages within sixty or seventy years at the very most, that neither in any of the Greek copies, nor in any of the translations, nor in any of the early Christian writers is there any hint whatever of its having ever been missing. Moreover, it is a text of immense practical influence on the administration of the Christian com-

munity, for apparently the bishops of Rome from Clement in the first century onwards claimed authority in the Christian commonwealth on the strength of the privileges therein conveyed to Peter; and though the authority of Peter's successor has been most vehemently resisted by many from the middle of the second century onward, by such men as Polycrates of Smyrna, Tertullian of Carthage, and S. Cyprian, yet none of them dispute the truth of Christ's words to Peter.

Considering all these points, can the denial of the genuineness of the text be attributed to real critical acumen or to scholarship? I fear there can be but one honest answer: it is due to nothing but unscientific prejudice. None so hard to convince as those who want to doubt.

The truth of the matter is so clear that many even of the ultra-radical critics acknowledge that the passage was always contained in the First Gospel, but they say that none the less it does not represent a genuine saying of Jesus, for

1. It is absent from Mark and Luke.
2. It is not in keeping with what the New Testament tells us of Simon Bar-jona.
3. It is not in keeping with what the Gospels tell us of Christ, for Christ evidently had no idea of building a church. He expected the end of the world soon after His death.
4. The explanation of the name Petrus bears all the marks of being an afterthought, a popular attempt to account for a striking and unusual name.

This I believe to be a full and a fair statement of the case against the historical truth that the words in question were actually spoken by Jesus.

Let us begin with the last-named reason. All the four Gospels ascribe the imposition of the name to Christ Himself in person. St. Mark (iii., 16): "On Simon He imposed the name of Peter." St. Luke (vi., 14): "Simon, whom He called Peter." St. John (i., 43): "Jesus looked upon him and said: Thou art Simon the son of John, thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation Peter)." If then all four evangelists err in distinctly ascribing the imposition of the name to the Master Himself, an act which in itself presents no historical improbability, we possess no biography of Christ at all, for the only witnesses to the story of His life are supposed to tell a needless and unaccountable untruth. It is certainly true that some Jews had a double name, one native name and another for their Gentile friends, who could not easily master Semitic sounds, but Simon Bar-jona was already known by his personal name, Simon, and his family name, Bar-jona, or to put it in English, Johnson, Bar being the Aramaic for son. The Greek name Petrus is certainly not the name Christ actually gave, for it is but the Greek equivalent of the Semitic name Cephas, which occurs in the Fourth Gospel and eight times in the Epistles of St. Paul. That Christ should have given a Greek name to one of the fishermen on the lake of Galilee, who habitually spoke Aramaic, no sensible man would have suggested in the first century. If then the name of Cephas was not bestowed by Christ, but was Simon's name from the beginning, this man had no less than three Semitic names: Simon, Bar-jona and Cephas, a most astonishing thing for a Jew!

St. Matthew's Gospel was certainly written within

25 years after Peter's death, if not considerably sooner, and we are asked to believe that when hundreds, if not thousands, of people were still living who had known Peter in the flesh, a legend should have arisen, a bit of word-play, telling that Jesus had first bestowed the name and had Himself explained the reason why, a legend endorsed by St. Mark and St. Luke, who wrote when Peter was still alive, and by St. John thirty years afterwards.

Why did not St. Andrew, Peter's brother, stop the growth of the legend, telling all and sundry that Simon had rejoiced in the name of Peter from birth, and that Christ had nothing to do with it? Petrus as a personal name was totally unknown in the Greco-Roman world, and so was Cephas in the Semitic world. Only one instance of doubtful date has been found in Syria. I wonder how Simon the Fisherman chanced to get this nickname which stuck to him through life and which was so honoured that legends said he obtained it from Christ Himself.

If Christ had nothing to do with Peter's name, the Gospels are worthless, all further research into the life-story of Christ is useless, and human nature in the first century was strangely different from human nature in the twentieth. The thing is absurd on the face of it. But if the name was certainly bestowed by Christ, why reject the only explanation of it which we possess, and which goes back to the generations of people who personally knew Simon Bar-jona? Why abandon common sense the moment we study the Gospels?

Now let us go back to the first point, that St. Matthew's praise of St. Peter and the explanation of his

name is absent from St. Mark and St. Luke. If it was a genuine saying of Jesus they would not have omitted it, so it is argued. But it is well known that St. Matthew gives the sayings of Jesus, which St. Mark for the greater part omits. Do not radical critics maintain that the First Gospel is practically the *Logia* of Matthew dovetailed in the story of St. Mark? Why then should the absence of a text in Mark prove that it is not genuine? But St. Luke does not mention it either! There is extensive matter in St. Luke which is not in St. Matthew and *vice-versa;* is all that spurious? On what principle can it be so considered? Are not Matthew and Luke supposed to have drawn on the same source, commonly called Q, or the *Logia,* and would it not have been a literary miracle if they had chosen the same matter throughout? If then absence from St. Luke is no proof whatever of the fraudulent character of other passages, why should it be in the case of the Petrine text? Why? Because prejudice will have it so. A passage is rejected because it occurs in one evangelist only; and when another passage, namely, the bestowal of the name of Peter on Simon by Christ Himself, occurs in all four evangelists, it is rejected likewise!

It is said that the Petrine text is not in keeping with the story and character of Simon as portrayed in the New Testament. But what means have we of comparing Peter's character with that of the other eleven Apostles, and how can we say that Christ could not have chosen him as leader of the religious community He founded? Peter is not pictured as a hero, but who amongst the Eleven were more fit than he for this post? Do we know? There are instances

enough of his faith and deep attachment to his Master, more than of the other disciples. When it is said that elsewhere no pre-eminence above the other Apostles is given to Peter, we think that this statement is so obviously against the evidence that it need not be taken seriously. A statement so completely at variance with the facts given us in the New Testament documents, may still be repeated in obscure circles under the emotional influence of the fierce religious revolt against the Papacy in the Sixteenth Century, but amongst calmer folk it is an anachronism. We are here concerned with scientific history, not with the dying embers of sectarian controversy. If anyone wants to know Peter's position in New Testament times, let him pick up a Bible Concordance and carefully go through the almost two hundred references to Peter, and then look up the eleven remaining Apostles, the majority of whose names occur only in the four lists of the Apostolic body. Even James and John occur only a score of times. The author of the Acts repeatedly speaks of the Apostolic body as Peter and his entourage and this expression precisely hits off the situation in the eyes of the true historian. It is waste of time to dwell on it any longer.

*Lastly,* it is said that the text cannot be genuine because Christ never intended to build a Church.

Well, His disciples certainly started one under the conviction that their Master told them to do so. How twelve mediocre men without a leader—for we have just heard that Peter had no pre-eminence amongst them—how twelve mediocre men, who scattered themselves to the four quarters of the globe soon after their Master's death, did as a matter of fact build up

a most astounding organisation which withstood successfully the persecutions of a Nero and a Domitian and the emperors that followed them, needs explaining.

If we maintain that Jesus of Nazareth, who first gathered them together to the number of twelve and called them Apostles, did not originate the idea of founding a Church, any person with historical instinct is left gasping with the question on his lips: Since a church of amazing vitality and strength existed within two or three generations of Christ's death throughout the Roman Empire, if Christ Himself never dreamt of a church, who was its projector, where did it come from?

In the name of common sense and historical sanity had we not better accept the New Testament statement that Christ intended to build it? Surely a statement is not necessarily untrue for the sole reason that it occurs in the Gospels!

Why did Christ collect twelve special disciples at all and give them a special technical name? Why did He say to them: Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven? Why did He say: Whosoever listens to you, listens to Me? Why: If a man does not obey the Church, let him be to you as a heathen and a publican? Why did He speak His parables, those of the ten virgins, the net cast into the sea, the woman with the leaven, the sower that sowed his seed, and all the others, if He did not intend to found a religious community? Why is He reported to have said as His last words on earth: To Me is given all authority in heaven and earth, therefore go ye and teach all nations, baptising

them; make them observe whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I shall be with you till the consummation of the world?

Must all these texts, must the one thought which gives unity and meaning to the four Gospels, be swept away on the "a priori" grounds that Jesus of Nazareth cannot have said such things? But if the Gospels are not trustworthy, what do we know about Him at all, to decide what He may have said and done, or not said and not done? The one sure fact of history is that in the first century there was a large religious organisation that claimed Him as its founder and shall we gainsay it on the plea that He cannot have dreamt of such a thing? He of whose life, according to "critical" principles, we know next to nothing? Most critics are delighted to grant that Jesus dreamt of returning after His death on the clouds of heaven; may He not also have dreamt of founding a Church?

Here let us leave the matter. The rejection of the Petrine text is a wild adventure, unworthy of sober minds, and the staggering audacity of rejecting it under the cover of criticism will not avail to deceive thinking men.

## CHAPTER II

### THE LAST VERSES OF THE GOSPEL OF ST. MARK

THE unity and integrity of the text of St. Mark is usually admitted and therefore needs no further defence. There is however one serious exception, which must be seriously considered, *viz.*, the last twelve verses of the final Chapter.

St. Mark first tells that Mary Magdalene, Mary of James and Salome, carrying spices for the anointing of Jesus, came to the tomb on Sunday morning and found the tomb open and received the message of the angel to tell His disciples and Peter that He went before them to Galilee. After this he adds: "they went out and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to anyone; for they were afraid." Then without apparent connection with what immediately precedes, we read as follows:

"But He, having risen early on the first day of the week, appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils. She went and told them that had been with Him, who were mourning and weeping. And they hearing that He was alive, and had been seen by her, did not believe. And after that He appeared in another form to two of them walking as they were going into the country. And they went away and told it to the rest: and they did not believe even them.

"At length He appeared to the Eleven themselves as they sat at table and He upbraided them with their incredulity and hardness of heart because they did not believe them, who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said unto them: Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation. He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned. And these signs shall follow them that believe: in My name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues: they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them: they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.

"So then the Lord Jesus, after He had spoken unto them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. But they, going forth, preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the words by the signs that followed."

This passage is perfectly consistent and coherent in itself. It seems a summary statement, which combines the story of Mary Magdalene at the tomb as given in detail by St. John, the story of the two disciples going to Emmaus as given in detail by St. Luke, with the solemn charge to preach and to baptise, as recorded by St. Matthew. This summary narrative is however given from the standpoint characteristic of St. Mark, *viz.*, the emphasis on the dulness of mind of the Apostles, who believed not, and on the gift of miracles, attesting the divinity of Christ's message. It is therefore not a mere summary of pre-existing documents, but an independent account, however brief, of facts recorded also elsewhere. The only strictly new information is that

Christ after His resurrection repeated the promise of miracles to be performed by His disciples.

But, however coherent in itself, this passage shows a break of thought with the preceding, or if not a break of thought, at least of literary sequence. St. Mary Magdalene is described as the one from whom Christ cast out seven devils, reminding us of the description of her in Luke viii., 2, but the Magdalene is twice mentioned by name in the immediately preceding verses as a person well-known to the readers, not needing any further introduction. And again the resurrection of Christ is timed as "early the first day of the week," but the arrival of the women and the rolling away of the stone has just before been already timed as "very early in the morning the first day of the week." This further indication of time is therefore superfluous. Moreover, the Magdalene has been mentioned among the women who fled from the tomb and said nothing to any man, and now without explanation she is said to have gone and told the mourning disciples. Any casual reader cannot but suspect that there is something amiss with the text.

Now this suspicion is confirmed by the fact that in the two oldest codices we possess, the Vatican one and that of Sinai, both of the fourth century, the Gospel ends with the words "For they were afraid." In the Vatican Codex a blank space is left, as if to leave the possibility of adding the remaining words afterwards. The ending is also missing in the Syriac of Sinai, though it is contained in the Syriac of Cureton. This shows doubt about the genuineness in the Syriac speaking world at an early date, say the third century. At some time also the ending was

expunged from the Armenian version, though it originally possessed it. It is wanting in an Armenian codex as late as the ninth century.

Moreover though other codices may have the final verses they sometimes betray a former omission by placing the words THE END after "for they were afraid," or by some note in the margin.

The problem becomes even more puzzling by the fact that there exists an alternative ending, which is much shorter than the canonical one. It runs as follows:—

"But all that they were commanded, they made briefly known to those in the company of Peter, and afterwards Jesus Himself also appeared to them, and through them He sent forth from the rising of the sun unto its setting the holy and incorruptible announcement of eternal salvation."

This ending occurs by itself alone in the best representative codex of the ancient Latin of Africa, a codex of the fourth or fifth century. A sixth century Greek codex of Mount Athos contains this ending first, but adds the canonical ending afterwards, with the introductory words: "This also has been handed down after 'for they were afraid.'" Three other Greek codices, of the eight or ninth century, give the short ending first and the long ending second, but they make it clear that they distinguish both from the authentic Gospel text by placing before the shorter one the remark: "Somewhere this also is handed down" and before the longer one: "But this also is handed down after 'they were afraid.'"

It occurs also in the margin of a tenth century Greek manuscript in cursive script, it occurs in a late

secondary recension of the Syriac, called Harklean, and in two native Egyptian (Memphitic) codices.

The shorter ending is so rare and so little widespread and evidently so late, that there is no likelihood whatever of its being in its present form the original ending of the Gospel. It is clearly a mere attempt to round off the Gospel somehow and not to leave the impossible ending "for they were afraid." Its existence only shows that the truncated text of St. Mark goes back to extreme antiquity and that our canonical ending was lacking in some early copies, and even unknown in the circles where the shorter ending was invented.

In a fifth century commentary on St. Mark, called that of Victor of Antioch, nothing is commented on after the words "they were afraid." The commentator either did not know either of the two endings or found no one who had interpreted them; but he has the following note, which is also to be found in some twenty cursive manuscripts:

"Even if the passage: 'But He, having risen early,' etc, after the above is not to be found in most manuscripts of the present Gospel, because people think it is doubtful, yet we, finding it in most of the accurate manuscripts and according to the Palestinian Gospel, as the true Mark has got it, have added also the resurrection of the Lord which is therein told, after the words 'for they were afraid,' *i.e.*, from: 'He being risen early the first day of the week' unto 'the signs that followed.'"

Eusebius of Caesarea wrote about 325 in answer to a friend who asked how to reconcile Mark's "early on the first day of the week" with Matthew's "late on the Sabbath" as follows:

"One can answer in two ways. A man, who does not admit the authenticity of this passage, the section which contains these words, could say that it is not found in all copies of the Gospel according to St. Mark, for the exact copies indicate the end of the story of Mark at the speech of the young man, who appeared to the women, to which he adds: they having heard him, fled and said nothing to anyone for they were afraid. At this point the end of the Gospel is indicated in almost all copies. What follows and what is found rarely in some copies but not in all, would be too much, especially if it contained some contradiction to the testimony of the other evangelists. That is what a man could say setting aside in advance and suppressing the whole question as superfluous. But another man, not daring to reject the authority of all that is found in any way whatever in the written tradition of the Gospels, will say that it is possible to understand it in ways, etc., etc."

The case then for the genuineness of this passage looks very black. In the third century in the Greek speaking world many manuscripts of St. Mark seem to have been without it.

There is however the other side of the picture. As a matter of fact all Greek manuscripts with the exception of those mentioned, contain the longer ending. All the ancient Latin manuscripts have it with the one exception above mentioned. All the MSS. of the Latin vulgate have it. The Diatessaron of Tatian, the Curetonian Syriac, the Syriac vulgate, the Jerusalem and the Harklean version have it, so likewise all MSS. of the two Egyptian versions, with the exception marked above, have it. So likewise the Gothic, Ethiopic and the Armenian ver-

sions. Still stronger in its favour is the testimony of the Fathers. St. Justin and St. Irenaeus in the second century accepted it. The oldest Syriac authorities, the author of the doctrine of Addai and Aphraates, accepted it. In the West it is cited without hesitation by St. Ambrose and St. Augustine and all Latins afterwards. In Egypt by Didymus the Blind, in Cyprus by St. Epiphanius, in Antioch by St. Chrysostom and in the so-called Constitutions of the Apostles It is even used by the opponents of Christianity; possibly by Celsus in the second century, in any case by the adversary of Macarius Magnes, who was probably Porphyry. The existence of the canonical ending is therefore directly traceable to the second century. In the fourth century it was regarded as Holy Scripture by the majority of writers, and no one directly rejects it. After the Fourth Century doubt about the passage soon disappears. A period of doubt is certainly to be observed, but seems never to have been able to overcome the big stream of attestation in favour of it.

How can we explain all these facts? Something happened with the text of St. Mark at the very beginning. Possibly the end of the papyrus roll on which it was written perished soon after it was issued, possibly St. Mark for some reason unknown had not finished it, when the first copy got into the hands of the faithful. But by whom then is the present canonical ending? Possibly by St. Mark himself, who after some interruption, perhaps after some longer period, added these words to complete his own Gospel. It is sometimes maintained that the passage is not in the style of St. Mark. This argument, how-

ever is somewhat weak. The stress laid on the dulness of mind of the disciples and on the gift of miracles as an attestation of the truth of the Gospel is thoroughly in the line of thought of St. Mark, even if the wording might slightly differ from that of the Gospel.

Other scholars, even Catholics, think that it is not by St. Mark himself but by some other disciple of the Apostles. Naturally no Catholic doubts its inspiration and canonical character, they only discuss its literary origin. If St. Mark himself had completed his manuscript, left unfinished through some accident, or mutilated afterwards by chance, he would surely have made the additional words flow more naturally from the preceding section.

In 1891 F. G. Conybeare found in the library of the Armenian Patriarch or Catholikos at Echmiadsin a manuscript of the Gospels of the year 986 in which the last twelve verses of St. Mark are preceded by the note: OF THE PRESBYTER ARISTON. The manuscript in itself is late, but the insertion is so striking and so quaint that it may well be based on fact. It is almost too strange not to be true. For a Presbyter Aristion, a contemporary of the Presbyter John and a younger contemporary of the Apostles happens to be known to us through Eusebius. His name occurs in the list of names of the informants of Papias of Hierapolis, early in the second century. Eusebius tells us that Papias quoted disquisitions of this Aristion on the sayings of Our Lord.

The matter becomes still more complicated by the fact that in 1906 Dr. Freer, of Detroit, U.S.A., found a Greek Manuscript of St. Mark, which was written

some time close on the fifth century. In this codex there is an insertion in the ending of the Gospel as follows:

At length He appeared to the Eleven as they sat at table and He upbraided them with their incredulity and hardness of heart because they did not believe them who had seen Him after He had risen. [And they excused themselves, saying: "This age of lawlessness and unbelief is under Satan, who does not allow things unclean by the spirits to comprehend the true spirit of God, therefore reveal Thou now Thy righteousness." They (thus) said to Christ, but Christ answered them: "The limit of the years of the power of Satan is fulfilled, but other terrible things draw near. And on behalf of those who sinned I was delivered over to death, that they might return to the truth and no longer sin, that they might inherit the spiritual and incorruptible glory of righteousness in heaven.] And go ye (He said unto them) into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation, etc., etc.

Now this additional matter is extremely ancient, for St. Jerome at the beginning of the fifth century quoted the above excuses of the Apostles and said that they occurred "in some copies and especially in Greek manuscripts."

Is this newly-found passage original? Some think so, for it fits in very well with the preceding words. Christ upbraids them and they excuse themselves naturally by appealing to their helplessness in a world under the power of Satan. Christ answers that though other dread things may come, the power of Satan has passed away through His death for their redemption from ignorance and sin, and it is their

duty as Apostles to preach these good tidings throughout the world.

The new section is so natural in the old context, that it almost seems that it is in its right and original setting. Others again think that though it fits in with the preceding, it does not fit in with the subsequent context of the command to go and preach. This however is surely not so, as the command to preach the good news is even better understood if the contents of that good news, the redemption from ignorance and sin, is previously mentioned. Whereas without the newly-found section the command to preach comes rather abruptly after the rebuke of the Apostles for their incredulity.

However this may be, is the ending of the Second Gospel really by Aristion and not by his fellow disciple, Mark? There are scholars who say that the note in that late Armenian manuscript is really valueless, and only means that the ending was copied out from a manuscript which belonged to a priest called Ariston. Having before him a text which omitted the ending, the copyist supplied the missing parts from Ariston's copy. It has nothing to do with the original authorship by Aristion, a disciple of the Apostles. Well, it may be so, but the coincidence remains most remarkable.

With due diffidence I venture to propose the following solution of the problem: The so-called "Shorter Ending" is not merely a makeshift to provide some termination to the Gospel. It is genuine up to the words "Jesus Himself," after which the longer ending begins. On this supposition the Gospel would run thus: "Go tell His disciples and Peter He is going before you into Galilee; there ye

shall see Him, as He said to you. And they went out and fled from the tomb. For trembling and amazement seized them. And they spoke to no-one, for they were afraid, but all that they were commanded they forthwith announced to those about Peter. But after this Jesus Himself, having risen early the first day of the week, appeared first to Mary Magdalene," etc., etc.

Even the remainder of the Short Ending is not pure invention. It seems to be made up of a combination of syllables, which occur in the Long Ending plus the Freer addition.

Surely ἀνατολῆς καὶ ἄχρι is a misreading for ἀναστὰς δὲ πρωΐ. The words Μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα. . . . δύσεως are a misreading for Μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα δυσὶν. Ἐξαπέστειλεν δἰ αὐτῶν τὸ ἱερὸν καὶ ἄφθαρτον κήρυγμα reminds one of ὑποστρέψωσαν. . . τῶ οὐραν. . . καὶ ἄφθαρτον . . . ἐξελθόντες ἐκήρυξαν

It is as if someone had a half-obliterated manuscript before him of which he could make out only a syllable here and there, which guided him in composing a sentence embodying roughly its general meaning.

The Shorter Ending therefore and the Freer Logion helps us to guess what happened nineteen hundred years ago. The ending of the original copy of St. Mark's Gospel was damaged when it was first given to publicity and transcribed. The last page, or the last few columns, of the papyrus roll were injured, and finally quite detached from the body of the text. The sentence: "But all they were commanded they forthwith announced unto those about Peter. But after this "Jesus Himself" stood at the juncture, became soonest illegible, and only survived

in a few instances. The remainder stood either on the detached page or a detached portion of the scroll and finally also became illegible, but not before it had been accurately copied at least by some. Possibly St. Mark himself, or an early copyist misjudged the length of scroll available and wrote our canonical ending on a separate sheet. The connecting sentence was written in smaller characters, or in the margin, as people will do before they decide to look for a further sheet. Any such eventuality would account for the facts.

With regard to the contents of the canonical ending they create no difficulty except in one apparent discrepancy with the other evangelists. St. Luke tells us that the two disciples that went to Emmaus on Easter evening were welcomed on their return by the Eleven Apostles and their companions with the cry: "The Lord has risen indeed and appeared to Simon." Now St. Mark says that these two disciples went and announced Christ's resurrection to the others but that they believed not even them. Instead of the joyous cry of faith, there is according to St. Mark still unbelief. The discrepancy is however only seeming, for even according to St. Luke, when Our Lord appeared to the disciples, "they were terrified and afraid and supposed that they saw a spirit." And Christ said to them: Why are you troubled and why do questionings arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle and see: for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see me have. And while they yet believed not and wondered for joy, He said: Have you here anything to eat? And when He had eaten before them, taking the remains, He gave to them."

The simple truth is obvious. In a sense the Apostles believed, because they accepted Peter's word that the Master had appeared to him. But between acquiescence in Peter's word that he had a vision of the Master and a belief, a complete realisation of the physical fact of the resurrection, there is a great difference. Only physical touch of His body and the physical fact of sharing food with Him could wholly overcome their incredulity.

People have said that St. Mark uses an exceedingly strong term in Greek for Christ "upbraiding" the Apostles for their unbelief. This is quite true, but even St. Luke makes Our Lord say to the disciples going to Emmaus: O foolish men and slow to believe after all the prophets have spoken! A strong rebuke indeed, yet the Apostles merited more, for they did not believe the women, nor the disciples that had seen Him. They may have believed in some sort of apparition, yes, but in the reality of the very body that had once lain in the tomb, no; nothing but Christ's homely demonstration that He was not a ghost could bring their mind to rest.

However the difference between St. Luke and the author of the ending of St. Mark in describing the occurrences on Easter evening is proof that the author of the ending was unconcerned about any appearance of divergence from St. Luke. Only an Apostle or a disciple of equal standing with St. Luke is likely to have taken such liberty. The same applies to the apparent discrepancy which we have already noticed elsewhere, I mean the discrepancy of the precise time of the resurrection, whether early on Sunday morning or late on Saturday evening.

A curious little touch which reminds us of the

scene in St. Luke, though not precisely identical, can be found in the fact that St. Mark makes Christ appear to the Eleven while they were at table—while they were reclining the Greek says—whereas St. Luke, though not expressly saying so implies this, for Christ asks whether they have something to eat and then eats with them.

Furthermore, Christ is said to have appeared to the Eleven, though from St. John we learn that strictly speaking on Easter evening only ten Apostles were present, St. Thomas being absent on that Sunday, though present on the following one. The author sketches the events only in broadest outline and under the circumstances was justified in using the term "the Eleven." None the less, had he written after the four Gospels were in full currency, it is not likely that he would have used an expression which was open to cavil. Only an independent authority, too close to the times, when he could be misunderstood, would have written thus.

We sum up. By whomsoever written, whether by St. Mark himself or by Aristion or by someone else, the closing account of the Second Gospel was accepted as authoritative in Christendom in the second century and this can only be reasonably explained by the supposition that it was written by an Apostle or some Apostolic man of similar standing to that of Mark or Luke, or Barnabas or Clement who are credited with the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Doubts were certainly entertained in the fourth century about the Marcan authorship of this section; in learned circles it was discussed, in some copies it was omitted, but its sacred and authoritative character was so firmly rooted in the tradition

of Christendom that there is no record of anyone definitely rejecting it as Scripture. These doubts, expressed for a time, definitely ceased within a few generations and left hardly any trace. The section is certainly not a mere summary or compilation of the other Gospel accounts but an independent narrative. It has nothing in common with the Apocryphal stories which the Church so energetically rejected. The discussions concerning it in the fourth century ended triumphantly in its favour. There is no reason why modern biblical criticism should reverse this verdict.

# CHAPTER III

## THE CHRONOLOGICAL ACCURACY OF ST. LUKE

TESTING the veracity of an historian is not an easy task, but the more an historian is found correct in minute and obscure details the more confidence we gain in his accuracy throughout. A person who is romancing about times and persons, places and events, of which he has only third-hand information, or only hazy recollection, a person who gives play to his imagination rather than follow the line of ascertained fact, is soon found out in mis-statements that betray his lack either of care or knowledge. St. Luke has often been tested in this way and never found wanting. Let us take a few examples.

In the third Chapter of his Gospel we read as follows: "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness and he came into all the country about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."

We have here mention of nine different persons, seven different places and four titles, all intimately connected and fixed for one definite year.

The purpose of this chronological, geographical and political note is plain. St. Luke intends to fix the beginning of Our Lord's public life, he wants to tell the precise date of Our Lord's baptism in the Jordan, when Christ was proclaimed by His heavenly Father as His dearly beloved Son in whom He was well pleased. About Our Lord's own age St. Luke had evidently no more precise information than that He was then about thirty years old. As Christ was born in the last days of King Herod's reign this is correct, for Herod died in the spring of the year 750 of the City of Rome and the fifteenth year of Tiberius began in October, 780 A.U.C. As Christ was born at least some months before Herod died, then if Christ came to the Jordan to be baptized before the Passover, He was slightly over thirty years old.

The reason, likewise why precisely the rulers Pontius Pilate, Herod [Antipas] Philip and Lysanias are mentioned and none other, lies in this—the public life of Our Blessed Lord was passed in their territories. The greater part, of course, in Galilee, the territory of Herod, a considerable part in Judea and Samaria, the territory of Pontius Pilate. Cæsarea Philippi on the north side of the lake of Tiberias was in the territory of Philip, and when Our Lord went into the region of Tyre and Sidon, it is not unnatural to suppose that He went through the territory of Lysanias.

Let us consider the title TETRARCH itself. It is a rare and obscure heraldic term. It is a Greek title, which the Romans adopted and used for a short time for native princes, less than kings, and especially for the native princes of Syria. It actually means: FOURTH-RULER. The word TETRARCHY was used by Euripides

for the four divisions of Thessaly, each part being a tetrarchy or a FOURTH RULE somewhat like an English county, or perhaps more correctly like a "riding" of Yorkshire, or the recent council-divisions of Lincolnshire. Now, the Romans retained the designation tetrarchy, when there was no question of a division into four, and called the princes who ruled these territories "fourth rulers." Hence Herod Antipas and Philip became tetrarchs, and Archelaus received the title of Ethnarch or NATION RULER. As Judea was the original home and seat of the Jewish nation, this title seemed more appropriate. Moreover, Jerusalem was the capital city of the Jewish race, hence Archelaus' title was slightly more grandiose than that of his brothers. The ruler of Damascus, Aretas, was also styled Ethnarch because his famous city was the home and centre of the Arameans.

The Romans were most punctilious and precise in the title of native princes. When Aretas assumed the title BASILEVS, or "King," Augustus, the Emperor, at first angrily refused recognition, but eventually granted it. Now, St. Luke correctly styles Herod, Philip and Lysanias, tetrarchs. There are coins extant to prove this. They have the words: *Herodou tetrarchou* on the one, and the word *Tiberias,* the name of the city he built, on the other. So likewise there are others with *Phil Tetrarchou* on the obverse and dated A.D. 33. There is also a coin with the inscription: "Of Lysanias Tetrarch and High-priest"; this, however, may possibly belong to an ancestor of our Lysanias who ruled some sixty years before. He was, of course, not a Jewish but a pagan high priest. On the other hand there are two

inscriptions, one on a rock surface and another on a stone slab of about 29 A.D., which mention our Lysanias, the Tetrach, referred to by St. Luke.

Now, if St. Luke had not lived in the middle of the first century, if he had not been closely acquainted with Syria, if he had not been Luke of Antioch, how easily might he have made a slip! The style and title Tetrarch was usual just about that time, it is mentioned in Strabo and Plutarch, somewhat younger contemporaries of St. Luke, but the Romans soon afterwards ceased to use it.

But there is more in this passage than mere correctness of title. There are the names. Lysanias for instance. When the historicity of St. Luke was first impugned, it was said that there was no such person contemporary with Our Lord. There had, indeed, existed a certain Lysanias who had ruled over those parts, but he had then been dead some sixty years, for he was put to death by Antony in 34 B.C. Nobody knew of a Lysanias who ruled a tetrarchy of Abilene in the days of Christ. It was a blunder of Luke. As a matter of fact St. Luke was right.

The site of Abila, the capital of Abilene, has been found; it lies on the river Barada, the same river which waters Damascus. The present railway line from Beyrouth to Damascus passes not far from the town. The railway station Souk Wadi Barada is close to the ruins. It is about an hour's railway journey from Damascus.

That a Lysanias reigned there in the time of Christ we know from the two almost identical inscriptions just referred to. One of these is still *in situ*, for it is engraved on the living rock. It runs as follows:

FOR THE GOOD ESTATE OF THE LORDS EMPERORS,
AND FOR THAT OF THEIR WHOLE HOUSE,
NYMPHAIOS SON OF ABRIMAIOS,
FREEDMAN OF LYSANIAS THE TETRARCH,
CUT OUT AND MADE THIS PATHWAY
AND BUILT THE TEMPLE AND THE PLANTATIONS.
HE PLANTED ALL OF THEM AT HIS OWN COSTS.
SACRED TO MALAKBEL
AND TO THE FATHERLAND.
A TOKEN OF HIS PIETY.

The date of this inscription is determined, first, by the fact that the tetrarchy of Abilene, as a separate province, or native territory, ceased to exist in 37 A.D., and secondly by the mention of "the Lords Emperors" in the plural. The title AUGUSTUS, which we have here translated Emperor, was indeed often put in the plural in Syrian inscriptions to designate the whole imperial family. In this inscription, however, the plural (AUGUSTI or to be more precise SEBASTOI, for the inscription is in Greek, not in Latin) cannot be thus explained, as the imperial family is mentioned separately afterwards. Hence the only explanation is that the SEBASTOI mentioned, refer to Tiberius and Livia. Livia was the wife of Octavian, and after his death until her own death she bore the title AUGUSTA. Thus for 14 years there were two AUGUSTI, the reigning Emperor Tiberius and the Queen-Mother Livia.

We have thus inscriptional proof that Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene some time between A.D. 14 and 29, the year of Livia's death, and St. Luke is vindicated. Now with regard to Philip. St. Luke calls him Tetrarch of Ituraea and the region of Trachonitis.

Here again St. Luke was accused of inaccuracy. Josephus says that Philip ruled Batanea, the Trachonitis, the Hauran, the Gaulan and the district of Panias. He does not mention Ituraea.

True, but the district of Panias, which Josephus mentions, was part of Ituraea.

The original home of the Ituraeans was somewhat more north-west, in the Antelebanon. There, Ptolemy, the son of Mennas, had formed a kingdom, which he ruled from B.C. 85 to B.C. 40. This kingdom extended from the Antelebanon to the South-East. Strabo, a younger contemporary of St. Luke, tells us that Aristobulus the Maccabee conquered a part of the Ituraean race. Now this conquest certainly did not go very much beyond Galilee. We know that Panias certainly belonged to the Ituraean territory which, after Ptolemy, Zenodorus and Lysanias ruled. Now this Panias district was first given to Herod the Great and then passed to his son Philip, who regarded it with special favour. St. Luke calls the district Ituraea because he used the older name, as a man to-day might say that Belfast was in Ireland.

Why does Josephus give five districts and Luke but two as forming the tetrarchy of Philip? Because Josephus wants to indicate precisely what provinces out of the wreck of the former Ituraean kingdom were assigned to this tetrarch, whereas Luke in a general note gives only the two extreme regions under Philip's rule—the parts of Ituraea which had become a Roman province, though a minute native State of that name had remained—and the Trachonitis.

St. Luke gives us then four princes: Pilate, Herod, Philip and Lysanias. We know why he mentions the first three, but why does he mention

Lysanias? The tetrachy of Abilene is so much out of the way that it seems uncertain, though of course not impossible, that Our Lord ever set foot in it; the Gospels at least say nothing about it.

Recently a most ingenious answer has been given. In the year 60 A.D., when St. Luke was in Cæsarea with St. Paul, he must have gathered most of the details for his Gospel. In those years Abilene was technically part of the Holy Land, for it was ruled by Jewish kings. For the first time Abilene became Jewish territory by being given to Herod Agrippa I in 37 A.D. He kept it till 44 A.D. It became Jewish again, when Agrippa II in 53 A.D. exchanged it for Chalcis. It then remained Jewish till 66 A.D.

St. Luke while at Cæsarea in 60 A.D. enquired who were the rulers thirty years before of the territories over which Agrippa II reigned. He obtained the correct answer: Herod Antipas, Philip and Lysanias. These, therefore, he included in his list of rulers in Our Lord's day, although perhaps in the exact territory of one of them Our Lord never set foot. These four then, Pilate, Herod, Philip and Lysanias, ruled over the Holy Land in the fifteenth year of Tiberius, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests. Now, considering that Philip died in 33 or 34 A.D., Lysanias had ceased to be tetrarch in that year or even before; that Herod was dethroned in 35 A.D. and Pilate was dismissed in 36 A.D., and that Caiaphas was deposed in the same year; considering that the whole length of Pilate's procuratorship was only ten years; considering furthermore that the political configuration of Palestine changed a number of times during the subsequent fifty years, but was never reconstituted precisely as it had been in the fifteenth year of Tiberius,

St. Luke's statement is that of a man with precise and correct information. Any man might have connected John the Baptist's preaching with the reign of Herod, for it was notoriously Herod who put John to death, but the other five names are not so bound up with the name of the Baptist, and the date "fifteenth year of Tiberius" would be a deliberate mystification unless built on certain knowledge.

Augustus, the Emperor, died August 19, A.D. 14. In Syria New Year began on October 1st. It seems almost, though not absolutely certain, that the six weeks between August 19 and October 1 were counted as the first year of the new Emperor Tiberius' reign. The fifteenth year would therefore be from October, A.D. 27, to October, A.D. 28.

Considering that Pontius Pilate was made Procurator of Judea in 26 A.D., he was less than two years in office when the Baptist began his preaching. St. Luke might easily have made a mistake, but he evidently did not.

On the supposition—not very likely, I admit—that Tiberius counted his regnal years not from the death of Augustus, but from the time that he was adopted as Joint-Emperor by his aged stepfather a short time before, Pontius Pilate can only just have been in office, and the precision of St. Luke would be still more remarkable.

How easy it was to make a mistake is shown by Josephus himself, who in the first edition of his *History of the Jewish War,* which he wrote in Aramaic and which has come down to us in an Old-Slavonic translation, tells us that John the Baptist was brought before Archelaus. Now, Archelaus was deposed about 6 A.D. Yet the same Josephus brings

the Baptist in contact with Philip the Tetrarch on the day of his death, which took place in 34 A.D. He confuses Philip the Tetrarch, son of Herod the Great and Cleopatra of Jerusalem, with Philip, also a son of Herod the Great but by the second Mariamne, the daughter of the high priest Simon. He makes Herod marry Herodias, Philip's wife, after Philip's death, and makes the Baptist rebuke Herod for having married his deceased brother's wife, though she had children by the first marriage. Herod's crime therefore is supposed to be not a crime against the natural law, the crime of adultery, but a transgression of a precept of the Mosaic Law, which forbade the marriage of a deceased brother's wife, unless she was childless, when, so far from being forbidden, it became a duty.

These mistakes led to chronological confusion, for there is no time between Philip's death and Herod's deposition to account for all events, such as the imprisonment and death of John, the flight of Herod's first wife, the war of Aretas, the defeat of Herod, the appeal to Rome, the march of Vitellius, the request of the royal title, the accusation before the Emperor and the condemnation of Herod.

Even if the passages in the Slavonic Josephus, should not be by Josephus himself, they were by some ancient Jew, not very far from those times. He fell into mistakes which St. Luke avoided.

It is interesting also to note how St. Luke calls the tetrach of Galilee, Herod and not Antipas, and again, the tetrarch of Ituraea and Trachonitis, Philip and not Herod, although he was as much a Herod as Antipas was, considering that they were brothers. As a matter of fact Antipas on his coins called him-

self Herod, and Philip on his coins called himself not Herod but Philip. When the same St. Luke later in the Acts of the Apostles refers twice to King Agrippa I, he also simply calls him Herod, the King. Now, Agrippa on his coins called himself Agrippa not Herod, but St. Luke was so close to the events that no further designation was required, no one would confuse him with Herod the Great, who had ceased to reign forty years before. The only thing required was the addition "the King," not the tetrarch, who had been deposed eight years before. The reason why St. Luke called him Herod and not Agrippa the King, is not far to seek. When St. Luke wrote, there was a reigning king called Agrippa, the so-called Agrippa the Second. He lived at Tiberias and ruled the extreme northern part of Palestine and Southern Syria. The use of his name might lead to confusion.

All these indications may be slight, but they all point the same way. A present day historian would naturally refer to King Leopold of Belgium, referring to the predecessor of King Albert, but as the years pass by, later historians will need some distinguishing mark to show that they do not mean the founder of the Coburg dynasty.

St. Luke adds: "under the high priest Annas and Caiaphas." Note that the correct text has "high priest" in the singular, not the plural. St. Luke avoids the impression that there were technically two high priests as there were two consuls in Rome. It is as if he said: "really Annas, but nominally Caiaphas." Later on in the story of the Passion, he refers only to Caiaphas, who was the high priest in function. Caiaphas was official high priest from A.D.

18 to 36. Annas, the father of five high priests and father-in-law of Caiaphas, was the real man of affairs. Deposed high priests retained a great deal of their former privileges. The high priesthood conferred a sort of indelible character on its bearer in Jewish eyes. At the time of the Jewish war, Annas, the younger, and Joshuah Ben Gamaliel, both deposed high priests, were at the head of affairs. St. Luke gives Annas first as the head of the reigning high priestly family and the man at the head of Jewish internal affairs.

No mere casual romancer would have placed these two names thus together, only one who was really at home in Palestinian matters.

Now let us look at the sentence which we translated: "the word of God came unto John." The Greek verbally has: "word of God became on John." This is a technical phrase often applied to the prophets in the Septuagint and savours of the original Hebrew. No Greek, unless he were steeped in the language of the Old Testament, would have used such a phrase. The first chapters of St. Luke are so strongly reminiscent of Aramaic phraseology and Old Testament terms that some connection with Semitic and Jewish informants or documents is obvious. What more natural than that the author in matters for the knowledge of which he had to depend on Palestinian Jews, should betray his source of information? If this sort of thing is a mere trick of style, it is the most artful deception to be found anywhere. One would first have to learn Hebrew or to get the Septuagint by heart to be able to do it and then chance that the casual Greek reader would not just pass it over as merely bad Greek!

There is, however, one point in which many still think that they have convicted St. Luke of error. It is this. Our Lord was born about 30 years before this fifteenth year of Tiberius and that before the death of Herod, the King. Herod died B.C. 4. Our common era is avowedly based on a miscalculation. The Bulgarian monk, Denis the Little, who soon after 500 A.D. made his learned studies in Rome, introduced the custom of counting the years from the Incarnation of Our Lord, and from that time onward very gradually and slowly people fell into the habit of doing the same. The custom was not quite universal, I believe, in 1000 A.D. Now, Denis the Little is a little out in his calculation, but how much we do not precisely know.

We know for certain that Herod died in the year which we now call 4 B.C.

Perhaps it may interest you to know how this certainty is gained. Josephus tells us that Herod died shortly before Easter. He happened to tell us also that there was a lunar eclipse shortly before he went to try the baths of Callirrhoe, a few weeks therefore before his death. Now there was a lunar eclipse visible in Jerusalem in the night March 12-13 of the year 750 A.U.C., *i.e.*, from the founding of the city of Rome, which is our year B.C. 4. Again, Archelaus, Herod's son, was dethroned by the Romans in 759 U.C. as Dio Cassius tells us, and this was in "the tenth year of his reign." Josephus endorses this in his *Vita*. Archelaus' accession to the throne and therefore Herod's death must have fallen in 750 A.U.C. = 4 B.C.

And again. Herod died "almost seventy years old," "in his seventieth year." He was therefore

sixty-nine when death overtook him. Now he was twenty-six when he became Administrator of Galilee in 703 U.C., therefore he died in 750 A.U.C. = B.C. 4. *Lastly.* When Archelaus went to Rome soon after the death of Herod, his father, to plead for probate of his father's second will, the future Emperor Caius, the adopted son of Augustus, was invited to take a seat in the Privy Council, though Caius was hardly more than a boy. This cannot have been before 750 A.U.C. or B.C. 4. These four facts established beyond reasonable doubt that Herod died in March, B.C. 4. What misled Denis the Monk in his calculations was perhaps the occurrence of a lunar eclipse on the night 9-10 January of 753 A.U.C. This, however, though in agreement with the first and last fact mentioned, does not fit in with facts two and three.

Now the apparent difficulty in St. Luke is that he describes the census, which brought Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, and which therefore must have preceded the death of Herod by at least a year, as "the first, when Cyrinus was governor of Syria." This Cyrinus, so it was said, was indeed governor of Syria, but not as early as 4. B.C: the earliest date of his governorship is about 10 years later. St. Luke mistook the census which took place in 6 A.D. and which gave rise to great disturbances in Palestine, for a census which took place in the days of Herod.

How can we solve this problem? Some solve it by translating the text of St. Luke in a different way. They reject our usual translation: "This was the first enrolment made when Cyrinus was governor of Syria" and maintain that the correct translation is: "This enrolment was made before Cyrinus was

governor of Syria." On this supposition St. Luke knew of the more recent and better known enrolment under Cyrinus 6 A.D., and pointed out that the one that brought Our Lady to Bethlehem was a previous one, not under Cyrinus. In this way the difficulty vanishes. This translation is certainly possible. The Greek has verbally: This enrolment was made first of Cyrinus being governor of Syria. To be first of a thing is certainly a Greek expression for "to be before a thing." I am first of you does certainly mean I am before you. The translation is certainly possible, though the usual one: "This enrolment was the first made, Cyrinus being governor of Syria," seems more natural.

Others solve it by proving that Cyrinus was governor twice, and the first time about 4 B.C. Great names are cited in favour of this solution, and the majority of historians and classicists admit it. Tacitus tells us that Cyrinus conquered the Homonadensian brigands in Cilicia, who had killed Amyntas their king. Now, Cilicia was part of the Syrian pro-consulate and Cyrinus must then have been pro-consul of Syria. Josephus tells us that Cyrinus was pro-consul later about 6 to 4 B.C. Now the so-called Tibur inscription tells us of someone, who in the reign of Augustus conquered the foes of Rome and celebrated a triumph at Rome in consequence, became then pro-consul of Asia and then pro-consul of Syria and Phœnicia AGAIN (ITERUM SYRIAM). The inscription is so much broken and injured that the actual name Cyrinus is not on it, but the majority of scholars agree that it can only refer to him. Granting then that Cyrinus was pro-consul of Syria twice, it remains very difficult to prove that

he could have made a census in Palestine between B.C. 6 and 4. The fact of his pro-consulship seems certain, but the date still creates difficulty. Here, however, we have rather to blame our ignorance than to accuse St. Luke of an inaccuracy which we cannot prove. Sir W. Ramsey tried to prove that Cyrinus could have been pro-consul before B.C. 4, and directed the census as military chief in Cilicia. However, this is by no means easy to fit in. Possibly the census was begun by Saturninus, to whom even Tertullian ascribes it, but completed by Cyrinus after Herod's death, and because Cyrinus completed it, it may have been popularly known by his name.

Père Lagrange has combined and interpreted the different data regarding the census in a very ingenious way. In the year 8 B.C. Augustus ordered the Jews to pay homage under oath to himself as well as to King Herod. In order to administer this oath to everyone an enrolment-census took place, and the arrangements to carry this out were entrusted to Saturninus. At first everyone obeyed. No one dared to resist ruthless Herod. Joseph and Mary came to Bethlehem in 7 or 6 or even 5 B.C., as this first census was only slowly carried through. Gradually resistance grew. More than six thousand Pharisees rebelled and refused the oath of homage. A split was thereby caused amongst the Pharisees, who till then were in favour of submission to the powers that were. Judas of Galilee was the leader of this fanatical sect, which broke away from the bulk of the Pharisees. Herod the King made Joazar the high priest preach submission. When after Herod's death Archelaus was intriguing in Rome, the pro-Roman party advocated annexation to the Roman province of Syria,

and Sabinus at Jerusalem acted as if annexation were already a fact. Now trouble is made all over the country. Judas rouses Galilee and makes Sepphoris his military centre. The Roman General Varus suppresses the rising. The Emperor Augustus decides against direct annexation and acknowledges Archelaus as ethnarch, or native prince. He rewards the Samaritans for having remained quiet, by remitting a part of their taxes. The interrupted census is now continued under C. Cyrinus about a year after Herod's death. When after nine to ten years Archelaus gets into disgrace he is exiled to the Alps, and Judea is annexed to the empire. The imperial land tax is imposed and this is done through Cyrinus, who is again pro-consul of Syria. As it only refers to the new Roman Province Judea, not to the remainder of Herod's former kingdom, there is no strong organized opposition by the whole Jewish people, only scattered attempts at resistance: for most people realized that in reality Roman rule had effectively begun with the death of Herod. This reconstruction of history is very plausible.

St. Luke's phrase that Our Lord was "about thirty years" at His baptism, allows a few years more and Our Lord may thus have been 32 or 33 years old, which He must have been if He was born some two years before Herod's death.

As Herod had the boys at Bethlehem murdered up to the age of two, he was evidently under the impression that the Child was not quite recently born. The coming of the Magi and the Flight into Egypt, as well as the Presentation in the Temple, are better accounted for if we leave some eighteen months at least between Christmas and Herod's death.

More minute chronology is impossible, till some lucky chance unearths some further document or inscription to give us more information. Meanwhile, St. Luke's authority stands unimpaired and awaiting further vindication.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE DATE OF THE DEATH OF ST. JOHN

In the twelfth Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles something is related which happened in 44 A.D. and it is told in these words: "About that time Herod the King stretched forth his hands to afflict some (members) of the Church. And he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword, and seeing that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also." Then follows the story of the imprisonment and miraculous delivery of Peter. This, however, does not for the moment interest us. It is rather the martyrdom of St. James which calls for attention. In recent years it has been maintained that the text has been tampered with, and hides a secret, which in this twentieth century has been at last revealed. In former years it was innocently believed that St. James was designated as brother of John merely to distinguish him from James, the bishop of Jerusalem, "the brother of the Lord."

But matters are not so simple as they seem.

The text originally spoke, so it is said, of the death of both John and James, the two sons of Zebedee, but in later years someone deliberately changed the wording, so as to make it appear that James alone was put to death by Herod. Is there any indication in the variant readings of the manuscripts that the text has been tampered with? No.

Codex Bezae adds explanatory clauses: "to afflict some members of the church *in Judaea,*" and "seeing that *his laying hands on the faithful* pleased the Jews." This is quite in keeping with the well-known character of this Codex. It also writes: *And* he killed James. The usual Greek reading is, *but* he killed James. The meaning being, that he inflicted on the the other faithful lighter punishments, say, scourging or imprisonment, but James he actually killed. A few MSS. and translations simply write: He killed James, without *and* or *but*. Some few later MSS. of the eleventh or twelfth century have both *and* and *but*. This—if there were any chance of its being original, which obviously there is not—would have to be translated: "but he killed even James."

Now critics maintain that the sentence does not run smoothly and therefore hides a secret. Supposing the text orignally had "and he killed James also"; then it must have mentioned the killing of someone else before, and who can this have been but John! Or supposing the text had: killed James and his brother John, instead of James, the brother of John!

Someone, so it is said, who believed the legend of St. John having died at Ephesus at an advanced age towards the end of the century, was nonplussed by this text of the Acts telling of St John's martyrdom in 44 A.D. and in consequence changed it to its present form so as to refer only to the death of James.

The suggestion is ingenious and has from the standpoint of modern criticism a great deal to recommend it. If St. John died in 44 A.D. he cannot have written either the Apocalypse or the Fourth Gospel,

for all, Catholics and non-Catholics, are agreed that these writings are of a later date. It is not too much to say that the suggestion has been almost greedily taken up by the modern school, and from a remote possibility has been changed into an ascertained fact.

St. John wrote the Fourth Gospel?

Why, everyone knows St. John was dead forty years before a letter of it was written!

Let us see.

St. Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians, tells us that "after fourteen years" he went to Jerusalem and that James, the brother of the Lord, and Cephas and John, who were regarded as pillars of the Church, gave him the right hand of fellowship, that he should go to the Gentiles and they to the Jews to preach the Gospel. St. John then was still among the living. Now fourteen years after St. Paul's conversion, or fourteen years after his first visit to Jerusalem, brings us to a date considerably later than 44 A.D. Even if this visit of St. Paul is identified with that mentioned in the Acts when St. Paul went to the Holy City with alms to relieve the famine—and this identification is exceedingly difficult—there still remains the difficulty of making St. Paul meet St. John before Easter of 44 A.D., for this is the latest possible date for the death of St. James. If St. John died with him, St. Paul must have met him before March 44 A.D. How could this be, I do not say fourteen years after his first visit, as Galatians seems to imply, but even after his conversion, considering that Christ died 30 A.D., or possibly 29 A.D., and that Paul as a youth (Neanias) assisted at the death of Stephen? However we manipulate our dates, even if we put Christ's death at 28 A.D. and place St. Paul's conversion four years

only after Christ's death, even so fourteen years after that conversion would preclude St. Paul seeing St. John before March, 44 A.D.

This objection surely completely overthrows the whole elaborate fabric of suggestions and suspicions. Suggestions which clash with fixed dates are worthless.

Again, this imaginary person who corrupted the text of the Acts is supposed to have done so, because it contradicted the Ephesian legend—Maurice Goguel loves to call it *la légende Ephésienne*—of St. John's long stay and death in that city. The legend then must have been firmly rooted in the minds of men, so firmly rooted in fact that a man would corrupt a sacred text to maintain it. According to the critics this can only have been the case towards the end of the second century. Now what is the likelihood that a textual corruption so late as c. 200 A.D. should not have left any traces? By 200 A.D. St. Luke's Acts had been written nearly 140 years and must have been multiplied in hundreds of copies, and was no doubt translated into Latin and Syriac, and the mention of the death of St. John did not survive in any copies at all! *Credat Judaeus Apella!*

Is, then, nothing to be said in favour of this early death of St John?

What there is we shall faithfully set forth, though it is an intricate affair.

There was once a man called Philip of Side, so called after the city in Pamphylia, where he was born. After 426 A.D. he was several times in the running for the bishopric of Constantinople, which however he never obtained. With his cabals and intrigues we have nothing to do, but we possess a description

of his literary labours by Socrates, the historian, his contemporary :

" He was an exceedingly laborious student and a man of very considerable literary attainments. He also formed an extensive collection of books in every branch of knowledge. Affecting the Asiatic style, he became the author of many treatises, for he wrote a refutation of the Emperor Julian's works and compiled a " Christian History," which he divided into 36 books, each of these books occupying several volumes, so that they amounted altogether to nearly one thousand, and the mere table of contents of each volume equalled in magnitude the volume itself. In this composition he has grouped together an abundance of heterogeneous elements from the vanity of displaying the versatility of his genius and the extent of his erudition : for it contains a medley of geometrical theories, astronomical speculations, arithmetical calculations and musical principles, with geographical delineations of islands, mountains, forests and various other matters of little moment. By forcing such irrelevant details into connection with his subject he has rendered his work a very loose production, useless alike to the ignorant and the learned ; for the illiterate are incapable of appreciating the loftiness of his diction and such as are really competent to form a just estimate, are disgusted with his wearisome tautology. He has sadly confounded the chronological order of the transactions which he describes : for after having related what took place in the reign of the Emperor Theodosius, he immediately goes back to the times of bishop Athanasius ; and this sort of thing is of frequent occurrence."

Four hundred years later Photius in his *Bibliotheca*

refers thus to Philip's Christian History: "He pours out a multitude of words but without any refinement or style, so that he bores or rather disgusts you. The work is ostentatious but without value."

The thousand volumes have mercifully perished and Philip does not interest us except for one thing; he seems to have given a quotation from Papias saying that St. John "was taken off by Jews" and suffered martyrdom like his brother St. James.

I say "he seems" for though it is probable that he did so, there is no certainty. This quotation, or supposed quotation, from Papias is found inserted in one manuscript only of a Greek chronicler, George Hamartolos, who wrote between 842 and 867 A.D. The manuscript is of the tenth century and the inserted paragraph contradicts the immediate context and therefore cannot very well have been written by the chronicler himself. In addition to this, in a fourteenth or fifteenth century manuscript this supposed quotation, in a changed and abbreviated form, occurs in a collection of extracts which is probably taken from Philip of Side's Christian History. As things go, the attestation, or guarantee for the correctness of the quotation could not very well have been worse. Papias wrote early in the second century; the earliest reference to his statement regarding St. John's death is nine hundred years later. We do not for a moment doubt that Papias did say *something* about St. John's martyrdom. A Frenchman would put it tersely: *Cela ne s'invente pas!* That sort of thing is not what anybody would invent, certainly not in the tenth century and that in apparent contradiction of the agelong tradition that St. John died a natural death. It seems very likely that the "wild

historian" of the fifth century, our notorious Philip, has something to do with it. The question is, what did Papias really say?

Here is the insertion in the chronicle of George: "John the Apostle after he had written his Gospel, was made worthy of martyrdom, for Papias, the Bishop of Hierapolis, having been an eye-witness of this, in the second book of the *Logia Kyriaka* affirms that he was taken off by Jews, thus plainly fulfilling, as well as his brother, the prophecy of Christ regarding them and their own confession and common agreement concerning Him." The fragment in the later manuscript reads: "Papias in the second book says that John the Divine and James his brother were taken off by Jews."

It is plain that the earlier manuscript gives the more original form of the quotation. Papias certainly did not call John "*the Divine,*" a term which arose much later. Moreover the first quotation gives us the natural context; the second is only an abbreviation among a collection of interesting snippets of ancient authors. Note that the first quotation does *not* say that John suffered with his brother, but that he fulfilled Christ's prophecy in common with his brother.

Now, Papias wrote a commentary on Christ's sayings. What more natural than that he should have commented on Our Lord's prophecy to James and John (Mt. xx., Mc. x.): "My cup indeed ye shall drink, but to sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give." This seems an obvious prophecy of martyrdom for both, yet only James's death by the hand of Herod was on record. This puzzled early Christians. It required explanation. Papias explained it. John, though he actually

died a normal death, yet was made worthy of martyrdom.

Now the tradition that St. John suffered at Rome by being thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil is of extreme antiquity. It is mentioned by Tertullian in his *De Praescriptione,* c. 36. It is mentioned there as a matter of absolute notoriety. It is mentioned in a defence of traditional Christian doctrine against innovators, who are taunted with the fact that their doctrines are new and are repudiated at all the apostolic centres of Christianity. As illustration of the apostolic character of Rome is mentioned the martyrdom of Peter and Paul, and also that in Rome "the Apostle John after being immersed in boiling oil and having suffered nothing, was exiled to the island." Both facts, the death of Peter and Paul and the martyrdom of John, are given as matters of notoriety which the heretics cannot dispute. It is customary in certain circles to set this story aside as fabulous, no doubt because it is miraculous; but this is not true criticism, but prejudice. Moreover, the Roman Church kept the 7th of May as the anniversary of St. John's sufferings at Rome. The feast occurs in the Gregorian Sacramentary. The first oratory, where at present the Basilica St. Joannis *ante portam latinam* stands, was probably due to Pope Gelasius in the fifth century. St. John then underwent true martyrdom, though he did not actually die under the torments, but was sent to the island [Patmos] to work in the mines. In the Apocalypse, John, the author, emphasises his "martyria" for Christ.

Now, if Papias told this story of John's martyrdom to show the fulfilment of Christ's prophecy that

both James and he would drink Christ's cup, would not that suffice to explain the whole matter? For it is impossible that Papias told the *early* martyrdom of John!

Why?

Because in the very quotation, on which we rely, it is stated that John the Apostle was made worthy of martyrdom "after he had written his Gospel," and that the author of the Gospel died in extreme old age, is implied in the last Chapter of the Gospel itself and has never been doubted. The person, therefore, who read Papias and gives us the quotation, saw in it nothing to suggest an *early* martyrdom of the son of Zebedee. Why then should we?

Moreover, we know of another careful reader of Papias who saw nothing in Papias to suggest that John the Apostle was not author of the Fourth Gospel. I mean Eusebius, who preceded Philip of Side by a whole century. Now, Eusebius was a reliable and methodical reader. He was keenly interested in this very question about John's residence at Ephesus. Eusebius had read Papias well, as his very remarks about him testify. Eusebius was anxious to show that Papias had not known John the Apostle but some other John called the Presbyter. In this matter he went as far as directly contradicting St. Irenaeus, who said that Papias had known the Apostle. Now, if the Apostle died in early martyrdom, Papias could not have known him, for Papias cannot have been born much before 80 A.D. Now, would Eusebius have overlooked what would so clearly have established his own thesis? He has gone to Dionysius of Alexandria to get some feeble support for his thesis in the suggestion that there

were two tombs of "John" at Ephesus and he would not have grasped at the absolute and triumphant proof right before him in Papias himself? Incredible! Eusebius, the curious collector of interesting bits of information from early authors, would not have told us that poor Papias—a man of little brains he calls him—said something which made John's authorship not only of the Apocalypse but even of the Gospel an impossibility? Who can believe it?

St. Justin ascribes the Apocalypse to the Apostle John. Now, St. Justin became a Christian about 130 A.D., and lived for some years at Ephesus itself. The Apocalypse is by practically unanimous attestation of early Christian tradition assigned to the days of Domitian c. 95 A.D., and it is evidently written from Patmos, an island of the Ionian coast. Could St. Justin have ascribed it to an author, who was many years dead before it could have been written?

There is, moreover, not merely the negative, but the direct positive argument as to what Papias contained about the time of the death of the author of the Fourth Gospel.

In a Latin Prologue to the Gospels, of uncertain date, but possibly quite early, we read:

"This Gospel, written after the Apocalypse was published and given to the Churches in Asia, by John, who was still amongst the living, as Papias, called Bishop of Hierapolis, a disciple and friend of John, records in his five books of commentaries, who wrote this Gospel at John's dictation."

Another anonymous Greek writer in *Corder's Catena* tells the same story: "John having become very aged, as Irenaeus, Eusebius and other trustworthy historians in the sequence have handed

down to us, dictated the Gospel to his disciple Papias."

These two quotations connect the testimony to the extreme old age of the author of the Fourth Gospel with Papias himself, and are irreconcilable with the idea that Papias ascribed to him an early martyrdom. If Papias distinctly described the early martyrdom of John the Apostle and ascribed the Fourth Gospel to a John, who died in old age, the distinction between the two Johns would have been manifest to the most casual reader, yet both Eusebius and Philip of Side, who quote Papias, accepted apostolic origin of that Gospel as an established fact. It is obvious, therefore, that Papias did not do so. In whatever way St. John died, he died *after* having written his Gospel.

But how to account for the wording "he was taken off by Jews." We do not know. Many suggestions may be made. I suggest that the Greek Ἰουδαίων is a misreading for Ῥωμαίων, not by Jews but by Romans. The two words are very unlike in English, but very similar in Greek. If Ῥωμαίων be read, Papias' reference is to St. John's martyrdom under Domitian at Rome and Patmos. But even if we retain the word Ἰουδαίων, it is quite possible that the cauldron of boiling oil was prepared for John by Jews. It is a sort of punishment which savours more of mob violence than Roman justice, though one is never certain what Domitian, notoriously as cruel as Nero, who made living torches of Christian martyrs, may not have done.

Or possibly Papias may have referred to some mob violence done to John in extreme old age at Ephesus, which hastened or brought about his

death. A man in extreme old age may be taken off through some rough handling by a crowd, which would not have caused death to a younger man. Papias may have considered that he could truly say that St. John was killed by Jews, whereas others may have attributed his death to natural causes, accelerated as we would say, by shock.

However, I cannot help thinking that the expression "was taken off" is a reminiscence of the expression in Acts xii., Herod "took James off by the sword." It may not be the actual expression of Papias, but only of Philip of Side, or not even of him but of his abbreviator.

A most ingenious suggestion has been made that the idea of the simultaneous deaths of James and John really arose from a confusion of James the Greater the son of Zebedee, with James the Less, the Bishop of Jerusalem. We know from Josephus that James, the Bishop of Jerusalem, died by Jewish violence in 66 A.D. shortly before the siege of the city. Josephus suggests that St. James was not the only one to suffer; it is possible, therefore, that John suffered with him. If St. John died in 66 A.D. it is still remotely possible that he wrote the Apocalypse, but his old age at Ephesus and his authorship of the Fourth Gospel is excluded. But the attestation of these two facts, which is almost overwhelming, cannot be set aside by a guess, which is only a pure guess and nothing more.

Further support for the early death of St. John is sought in a Syriac martyrology written in Edessa in the year 411-12 A.D. In this we read for December 27th: "John and James the Apostles in Jerusalem." The heading of the martyrology reads: "The names

of our lords the martyrs and victors and their days on which they obtained their crowns."

This at first looks formidable, yet on a second inspection it dwindles to nothing. The Syriac is a translation from the Greek, as is plain from the martyrology itself. We have therefore to do with a Greek calendar, and there is no question of any early tradition in the Eastern world about these matters. Eastern martyrs, Syrian and Persian, are added at the end. Now we know what Western (Greek and Roman) Christianity meant with this cycle of Saints to be kept immediately after Christmas. St. Stephen was kept then as now on December 26. We still keep St. John on December 27 to-day. But note that this Greek Calendar gives for December 28: In the city of Rome: Paul the Apostle and Simon Cephas the head of the Apostles of Our Lord. Now if anything be certain it is that Peter and Paul did not die on December 28, but on June 29th, and that probably not in the same year.

It is a list of commemoration days as kept in Greek-speaking Christendom. Well-nigh the whole Church seems to have kept the beginning of the year from December 25 with a cycle of the first martyrs and apostles. In this calendar St. Stephen is (most incorrectly) called *Apostle* and Protomartyr, first martyr. Then the next day follow John and James. Who were they? The best answer surely is contained in a martyrology of Carthage written soon after 505 A.D. In this we read: December 25, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God. December 26, St. Stephen the first martyr. December 27, St. John the Baptist and James the Apostle, whom Herod killed. December 28, the Holy Innocents, whom Herod

killed. The African Church therefore saw in this John the Forerunner of Our Lord, not the Apostle. The Syriac calendar need not refer to John and James, the *Apostles*. In Syriac the plural Apostles does not differ in writing from the singular Apostle, it differs only in pronunciation. In later Syriac MSS. dots are added to warn the reader to pronounce the plural. Hence the original may well have had John and James the Apostle. The same thought which led to the commemoration of the Holy Innocents on December 28 as firstlings of martyrdom even before Christ's death, may well have led to the commemoration of the Baptist in Christmas week, as well as St. James the first of the twelve Apostles to be martyred.

If we read the panegyric of St. Gregory of Nyssa on St. Basil, a sermon preached soon after 380 A.D., we make the surprising discovery that St. Gregory saw in the John, whose feast was kept in Christmas week, not John the Apostle, but as they did in Carthage, John the Baptist.

We must quote the opening of his sermon: "God has arranged a beautiful order in these yearly feasts of ours, which in an ordered sequence we have been keeping in these days and are keeping still. Now the order of these spiritual celebrations for us the great Paul already taught through wisdom from above. He says: [Ephesians iv., 11] that first in order are the Apostles and Prophets, and after those pastors and doctors. With this apostolic sequence agrees the order of these yearly celebrations. But the first feast [Christmas, introduced in Antioch shortly before from the West] I do not count with the others. For the feast instituted on account of the divine manifes-

tation of the Only Begotten Son, shown to the world through His birth from a virgin, is not merely a celebration like the others; it is the holy of holies, it is the feast of feasts. Let us enumerate those that follow upon it. First Apostles and Prophets made the beginning of this mystical chorus. For both the apostolic and prophetic spirit belong to these Saints. They are the following: Stephen, Peter, James, John, Paul, and after these, in keeping with his order, a pastor and doctor inaugurates his celebration which we are now keeping." He means St. Basil, whose panegyric he is preaching. He reminds his hearers that though Basil lived a long time after Paul, still this is to be expected in the order of God's providence. Moses lived a long time after Abraham, Samuel a long time after Moses; and Elias a long time after Samuel, and after him "the great John, and after John, Paul; and after Paul, Basil." Obviously St. Gregory thinks of the Baptist and not of St. Paul's contemporary the Apostle. This is abundantly plain in the course of the sermon, in which after Abraham, Moses, Samuel and Elias, he speaks of "the son of Elizabeth and Zachary." A large part in fact of the sermon consists of a comparison between the Baptist and Basil!

Now, remember this is said by one of the most celebrated preachers of the day to a public audience, probably at Antioch, and a couple of days after they have been keeping the feast of this "Great John." Even if the sermon in question were not Gregory's, as has been suggested by one scholar, it is still almost contemporary. The commemoration of St. Peter and St. Paul after Christmas instead of on June 29th is too ancient to admit of a much later date. The value

of this sermon as a witness is therefore unimpaired. Since then we possess a calendar of Carthage which distinctly calls the John of Christmas week, John the Baptist, this cannot possibly be a mere mistake. In the East and West, at Antioch and Africa, it was surely the Baptist's feast which they kept.

On the other hand the fact that in the Roman Sacramentaries (Leonine and Gelasian) December 27 is set aside for St. John the Evangelist alone without St. James, makes it almost certain that the *Roman* Church saw in the John of that day not the Baptist but the Apostle, and that at the very time from which our Greco-Syrian calendar dates. This, however, by no means implies that the Roman Church commemorated the martyrdom of St. John, or thought he died a martyr in the strict sense. Many ancient Sacramentaries give no indication of a festival of St. James. In some Gallican liturgies St. James was associated with St. John on the 27th of December. In the Gellonensian martyrology the entry for the day is remarkable: *Ordinatio episcopatus Jacobi Apostoli fratris Domini et assumptio S. Joannis Evangelistæ,* "the ordination to the episcopate of James the Apostle, the brother of the Lord and the assumption of St. John the Evangelist." The word *assumptio* concerning St. John tells us of the legend already current in the days of St. Augustine of Hippo. This *assumption* of St. John at Ephesus occurs in many calendars.

A Gothic breviary gives December 30 as a festival of St. James the Apostle, the brother of John and Evangelist, and December 29 as a festival of James, brother of the Lord. The same combination meets us in the calendar of the Armenian Church. In the

Mozarabic missal we find a commemoration of St. James, the brother of the Lord, on December 29.

The fact is that the Church of Jerusalem had from early days departed from the primitive custom of keeping only the feasts of Saints, whose relics they posessed or whose place of martyrdom was in the city. The Church at Jerusalem surrounded the Christmas season with a cycle of Saints days closely related to Our Lord. They originally kept St. Peter and St. Paul two days after Christmas, but soon the correct date kept at Rome for these Apostles prevailed. St. Stephen and St. John were taken over at the end of the fourth century by the Universal Church. St. James' festival did not prevail for long. The Roman liturgy adopted it for a short time, it survived longer in Gallican and Gothic liturgies and longest in the Armenian Church. When the Apostolic Constitutions speak of the Feasts of the Apostles they probably mean this cycle of December Saints. But neither East nor West was ever quite clear, who the James was whose feast was kept about this time. Perhaps the best attested explanation was that it referred to James, the Bishop of Jerusalem, or James the Less. The *ordinatio episcopatus* would be a parallel feast to the feast of the *Cathedra Petri* at Rome and Antioch, and be as it were a *Cathedra Jacobi* at Jerusalem, a natural commemoration to make in the Holy City. Probably a feast of James, the brother of John, was also kept during the same season, hence we have the uncertainty of dates 27, 29, and 30 December.

The most natural explanation of it all would be that the three dates refer originally to the Baptist, the Apostle and the Bishop of Jerusalem. When once

the idea was started to begin the ecclesiastical year with a series of great Saints mentioned in the New Testament in close connection with Our Blessed Lord, what more natural than that they should have begun with St. Stephen the Protomartyr, who saw the heavens opened and Jesus standing at the right hand of the power of God? Next they would take St. Peter the Chief of the Apostles, *dignitatis causa,* then James, the brother of the Lord, especially if the idea started at Jerusalem, of which he was the first bishop, then the Baptist who pointed out the Lamb of God and finally St. Paul, who saw Christ as it were out of due time. On the other hand the list of Saints was somewhat different in different places. All agreed to begin with Stephen, the protomartyr, and to continue with St. Peter, but the Syrian calendar immediately adds Paul, then John, then James. The list was evidently not closed if towards the end of the fourth century they could add St. Basil on December 30. St. Basil was certainly not a martyr. Even if Peter, James, and John in some districts were taken to be the famous trio of Apostles, mentioned in the Gospels, this would be quite natural, but would prove nothing for the martyrdom of John.

To infer anything as to the mode or place of death of St. John from the cycle of feasts is as idle as to conclude that Philip and James must have suffered in the same way or place, because their festival falls on May 1 in many martyrologies and sacramentaries, and is even in some of the former associated with Hierapolis. St. Simon and St. Jude are commemorated together on October 28, but it would be idle to theorise as to any similarity in the mode of their death. We must therefore dismiss any inference from

the conjunction of the two names as to the martyrdom of both the sons of Zebedee as utterly valueless.

A third, still weaker, argument for St. John's martyr-death is derived from the Syriac writer Aphraates, the Persian, who besides Peter and Paul mentions only two other apostle-martyrs, James and John. First of all it must be proven that the James mentioned is John's brother and not merely the James mentioned with John in the Jerusalem martyrology, at least if we wish to establish the early death of John. Secondly. It is constantly forgotten that no actual death under torments is required for the title of martyr. Martyr is the Greek word for "witness" and can be applied to all who "witnessed" for Christ by being ready to undergo torments for Christ's sake. Who would refuse the title martyr to the author of the Apocalypse, the John, who was at Patmos "martyrounta," being a witness, a martyr of Christ; in Patmos on account of his "martyria" for Him? Who could refuse the title martyr to one who was immersed in a vessel of boiling oil for the sake of Christ? Then again it is said, Heracleon, a Gnostic of the early second century, names as Apostles who have not undergone martyrdom, "Matthew, Philip, Thomas, Levi and several others." Surely, if Heracleon had known that St. John had also not undergone martyrdom, he would have mentioned him by name and not included him amongst the others. The answer is simple: If St. John, though not actually dying under the torments, had undergone martyrdom for Christ, it precisely suited Heracleon to leave the case of St. John in ambiguity merely to swell the number of several others.

This, I think, is all that can possibly be said for

the early martyrdom of St. John. Maurice Goguel very well remarks that the remembrance of the death of the Apostle John seems to have disappeared very early under the influence of the Ephesian legend about John. Quite so, very early indeed. Heitmüller thinks that the omission from the Gospel of St. Luke of the prophecy of martyrdom to both the sons of Zebedee: "My cup ye shall drink" and the omission of St. John's death with St. James's in Acts xii, 2, marks already the disappearance of the primitive tradition. Very early indeed, in fact remarkably early, considering that St. Luke was a contemporary of St. John and it would be well-nigh a miracle, if St. Luke, as his friend St. Paul, had not made the personal acquaintance of St. John.

Christ's words that both sons of Zebedee should drink the cup, which He was about to drink, would most naturally lead early Christians to expect a martyr's death for St. John as well as for St. James. Legends soon grew about the later life of the Apostles. In spite of circumstances favouring the rise of a legend, no legend whatever ascribes a martyr's death to the younger son of Zebedee. Evidently the facts of history were too notorious, too well-established to be meddled with. It was left to twentieth century critics to manipulate history in favour of a pet theory. The whole thing is a mare's nest. Alas, twentieth century myths are clothed in such garments of scholarship, and retailed with such assurance that it takes a long time to explode them.

# PART II

## *NEW TESTAMENT TIMES*

# CHAPTER I

## WAITING FOR THE MESSIAS

EVERY year in Advent the thoughts of a Christian naturally travel back to the time when the age-long expectation of the ancient Jews for the coming of their promised King was about to be fulfilled. There is hardly a Christian, we fancy, who has not sometimes wondered what was in the mind of the people of Israel in those days, that they should so woefully have misunderstood the counsels of God and not have recognised their Messias when He was among them.

We possess a touching picture of some pious Jews of that time in the Gospels.

"Behold there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Ghost was in him. And he had received an answer from the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. And he came by the spirit in the temple. And when his parents brought in the child Jesus he took him into his arms, blessed God and said: Now dost thou dismiss thy servant, O Lord, in peace, because my eyes have seen thy salvation." "And there was one Anna a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Aser; she was far advanced in years, and had lived with her husband only seven years in her youth, and now she was a widow of eighty-four years, and departed not from the temple, by fastings and prayers, serving night and day.

She at the same hour coming in, confessed to the Lord and spoke of him to all that looked for the redemption of Israel."

These were devout and simple folk amongst the Jewish laity. St. Luke has also preserved for us a picture of Messianic hopes amongst the Jewish clergy. He gives us the song of a certain Zachary, a priest of the course of Abia whose wife was of the daughters of Aaron, on the birth of his child who was to be the forerunner of Messias :

" Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for having visited and wrought redemption of his people, for having raised up a horn of salvation to us in the house of David, his servant, as he foretold by his holy prophets of old. In the tenderness of his mercy he has visited us, the day-star from on high ! "

And his wife, Aaron's daughter, was so overcome when the destined mother of the Messias came to her that she cried : " Whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me, blessed are thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb ! " So great her trembling awe at the overwhelming honour done to her by this visit that she felt her own unborn child leap in her womb for fear and joy.

Luke of Antioch gives us in these few master strokes an outline of Jewish Messianic expectations, which has never been surpassed.

It is, however, natural that we should wish for some more details of the mental attitude of the Jewish nation at large, which led to the awful catastrophe of their rejection of the Messias after He came. Had the majority of the Jews been as Simeon and Anna,

as Elizabeth and Zachary, they would not have crucified the Saviour of Israel.

None the less, Messianic expectation was so widespread and so intense that Tacitus, the Roman historian, could write about Jewish preparations for the war of 70 A.D. (Hist. v, 13): "Many were persuaded that it was contained in old writings of the priests, that precisely about that time the East would grow mighty, and that men coming from Judea should seize the government. These ambiguous words had pointed to Vespasian and Titus. But the crowd, as human covetousness is wont to do, had interpreted these things in their own favour, and even by misfortune could not be brought to realize the truth." Suetonius speaks more strongly: "Throughout the whole of the East an ancient and unbroken persuasion had spread, that, about that time, men coming from Judea should seize the government. This prophecy about the Roman Emperor the Jews appropriated to themselves and rebelled."

Even Josephus, who of set purpose slurs over the Messianic hopes of his nation, was forced to write about the causes of the same war: "What urged them most to war was an equivocal oracle, apparently found in the Sacred Books, that about that time someone, come from their country, should rule the whole earth." Then he, the Jew who had bought ease and honour from the enemies of his nation, adds with limitless effrontery: "This they applied to themselves, and many learned men erred about the explanation, for the oracle meant Vespasian, proclaimed Emperor in Judea."

It is a fact, then, that Jewish hopes, spread by the Jews scattered throughout the length and breadth of

the Empire, by personal propaganda, and by the Sibylline Books, had come to the knowledge of the heathen world.

This heathen world in its own quaint way had been waiting for the Messias. The natural tendency of heathen thought, as Sir W. Ramsay has pointed out, was one of sadness, and pessimism: The world was gradually getting worse and there was no remedy in sight; but the greatest of the Latin poets, Virgil, about the year 42 wrote his famous 4th Eclogue, in which he reversed the common trend of thought, and prophesied the coming of a better age, an age to be introduced by the birth of a Child. He thought the Child was to be born in the consulate of Pollio (42 B.C.), and thus anticipated the Child of Bethlehem by 38 years; but his description of Messianic blessedness is so striking that it is hard to believe that he had not read the Messianic prophecies in Isaias. These prophecies had been translated into Greek at least 100 years before Virgil wrote, and the great poet and book-lover must have had a copy in his hands, and been so impressed that he expressed his own hopes in scriptural language. It is perhaps true that the child he hoped for was the child to be born from Scribonia and Octavian, but his language is pitched in such an exalted strain that it reads almost as a religious anthem in praise of something superhuman: and Christians may be forgiven if since the days of Constantine they have seen in Virgil a pagan prophet foretelling Christianity.

Messianic expectations had pervaded the Greco-Roman world. This expectation had been spread far and wide by the Sybilline Books, not indeed the old books which had been destroyed in the fire of the

Capitol in 82 B.C., but the new ones gathered later by the authority of the Roman Senate, and current in the Hellenistic world. The earliest of these goes back to the reign of Ptolemy Physcon (145-117 B.C.), the latest to 300 A.D. In the pagan world, however, the expectation remained but hazy and faint; within Jewry it became a fiercely burning flame, which, when it was not tempered by calm faith in Jesus of Nazareth, devoured the Jewish nation and State.

The second century previous to the public life of Christ had not been favourable to Messianic hopes. The Messias was to be a Son of David, and David was of the tribe of Judah, and in the famous prophecy in the Law itself stood written that "the sceptre should not pass from Judah till Shiloh come." Hence every Jew knew that from the tribe of Judah and the family of David was to come he that was to reign over Israel.

Now, when Jewry was oppressed in the second century before Christ by the Syrian Kings of Antioch, they had been delivered miraculously not by men of the tribe of Juda, but by the Maccabees, who were of the tribe of Levi and the house of Aaron. These Levite priest-kings had reigned for about a hundred years, and during their prosperous government the Jewish mind had become not a little confused. They did not, could not, in fact, forget that final salvation was to come by Judah and that the present Levite royalty must therefore be transitory, but the Maccabean deliverers had been so glorious, their reign at first such a blessing to Israel, God's intervention in their success so manifest, that it seemed ungracious to emphasize that all this was not permanent, and that they looked forward to a time when

these Levite rulers should be superseded by those of David's stock. It was not only ungracious, it was impolitic, it was dangerous.

We have several documents illustrating the public mind at the time; one of them the so-called *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,* is most curious. It purports to be the prophecies of the twelve sons of Jacob concerning the future of their respective tribes. It is obvious that the author is in a difficulty. He intended to glorify Levi, but was hampered by the national faith being centred in Judah, and he effected a somewhat quaint compromise. Levi and Judah are so combined that one who ardently waited for the Messias could not say it was unorthodox, yet an ardent admirer of the Levite Maccabees would be more than gratified.

In the *Book of Jubilees,* a production of the same period under John Hyrcanus, the same embarrassment is noticeable. Messianic times are described in sublime words, but the person of the Messias is left somewhat vague: "In those days the Lord shall appear in the eyes of all, and all shall know that I am the God of Israel, and father of all the sons of Jacob, King on Mount Zion for ever and ever." God Himself shall appear, but the Davidic king is passed over. Isaac is made to bless his grandsons, and he blesses Levi first, and then turns to Judah:

"May the Lord give thee strength and power to tread down all that hate thee; a prince shalt thou be, thou and one of thy sons over the sons of Jacob; may thy name and the name of thy sons go forth and traverse every land and region; then will the Gentiles fear before thy face and all the nations will quake. In thee shall be the help of Jacob, and in thee be found the salvation of Israel. And when thou sittest on the throne of the honour of thy

righteousness there will be great peace for all the seed of the sons of the Beloved (Abraham)."

According to the third book of *The Sybilline Oracles,* vv. 608-615, written c. 140 B.C., a King is sent by God from the rising of the sun (east), who puts an end to war by the counsels of God; gives unto destruction some of the warring nations; makes alliances with others; raises up the people of Israel and restores it to its prosperity. But the rebel kings again combine against Israel. Then comes God's final wrath destroying them utterly; Israel is saved for ever. God's kingdom is established for ever on earth, and all adore the Immortal King. But this Immortal King can, and perhaps does, refer to God Himself directly, not to the Messias. The King from the East is clearly the Messias, but his connection with the tribe of Judah is passed over in silence. In the parable of the weeks in *The Book of Enoch,* where world-history is described under the simile of sheep, and lambs, and wolves, and so on, the Messias is a white bullock with great horns, but his precise function in the redemption of peoples is not indicated. The documents quoted give us a mere earthly Messias, a descendant of David, who still rules as temporal king. He is remarkably, even miraculously, wise and strong, but no more. It would, however, be unjust to the Jews not to refer to a higher and sublimer view which was held in many circles.

We happen to possess a pen picture of the Messias drawn by a pious Jew a generation before Our Lord. Some thirty years ago at Cambridge eighteen psalms, under the title of *Psalms of the Pharisees,* were published by H. E. Ryle and M. R. James, who gave to the world a complete text of what was previously

known only in fragments. Psalm 17 contains the most detailed description of the Messias. It was written very soon after September, 48 B.C., and is therefore contemporary with St. Joseph and the parents of Our Blessed Lady. These psalms were originally written in Hebrew and must have had a considerable vogue. At present we possess only a Greek translation, but good fortune may bring us the original text, and we shall then possess a song which may well have been familiar to the ears of Our Blessed Lady.

Part of the song does not directly interest us. It is a complaint of the cruelties which the Jews suffered from the Romans under Pompey, who in 60 B.C. took Jerusalem, and made Aristobulus, and his son, Antigone, walk before his triumphal car in Rome; and a complaint against the degenerate Maccabees, sons of Levi, who had usurped the royalty due only to the tribe of Judah and the race of David, and exiled the Pharisees:

Thou Lord hast chosen David as King over Israel
And Thou hast sworn to him regarding his race for ever.
For our sins sinners have imposed themselves upon us,
To whom Thou didst promise nothing, and they have driven us away.

* * * * * *

Pay heed, Lord, and raise over them their King, Son of David,
At the time fixed by Thee, O Lord, to reign over Israel Thy Servant;
And gird him with power, that he may bring down the unjust leaders,
That he purify Jerusalem from nations who trample it down and destroy it.
Wise and just, may he drive the sinners away from the inheritance;

May he break the insolence of the sinner as one breaks potter's ware;
Let him shatter their confidence with a rod of iron.
Let him destroy the nations who know no law, with the word of his mouth,
And his rebuke turn to flight the nations before him.
Let him convince sinners by the thoughts of their own hearts.
And he shall reunite the Holy People, which He shall govern in justice;
And he shall judge the tribes of the people, sanctified by the Lord their God.
Nor shall he let injustice again instal itself in their midst.
And no man whatever given to evil shall dwell with them.
For he shall know them all as the sons of their God;
He shall redistribute them on the land according to their tribes;
No foreigner or alien shall reside amongst them.

When, owing to internal political strife, the popularity of the Maccabees waned; when, after the rule of Queen Alexandra, her two sons Hyrcanus and Aristobulus quarrelled and called in the Romans, whose General, Pompey, took Jerusalem, and Maccabean rule practically came to an end: then again the Jews turned with renewed earnestness to their Messianic hopes.

After twenty years Herod began his reign. Herod was neither of Levi nor of Judah, but only a proselyte, but he was at first a vigorous and successful ruler and clearly had a party in his favour. During his reign it would have been highly dangerous to emphasize the longing for the Davidic king overmuch. Of course, Herod professed to be an enthusiastic Jew, and in lavish expenditure on the restoration of the Temple exceeded the profusion of Solomon, but he could not alter the doctrine of the coming Messias, so deeply imprinted in the national

consciousness. However, it was safer in his days to relegate the figure of the Messias to the remote future of ideal righteousness.

There can, however, be no doubt that Messianic hopes tended from year to year to become more definite. Josephus tells us of three adventurers who, during Archelaus' absence in Rome, took the title of king, and whom Varus, the Roman General, repressed, taking Jerusalem and crucifying three hundred rebels. In those dark years was written the *Assumption of Moses*. In it we read:

Then His kingdom shall appear through His whole creation, and the Devil shall have an end, and with him sadness shall be taken away. Then the hands of the Messenger shall be filled, who is established in the highest, who shall straightway avenge them of their foes. The Heavenly One shall arise from the throne of His kingdom, and shall come out of His holy habitation with indignation and wrath for His children. The earth shall quake; even to its bounds shall it be shaken; and the lofty mountains shall be brought low and shall be shaken and the valleys shall fall. The sun shall not give his light and the horns of the moon shall be turned into darkness; they shall be broken and the whole of the moon shall be turned to blood, and the circuit of the stars shall be disordered. The sea shall fall even to the abyss. The fountains of waters shall fail and the rivers be afraid because God the Most High, the Eternal, the only God, shall arise and manifest Himself to punish the nations and destroy all their idols. Then shalt thou be happy, O Israel, and shalt mount on the neck and the wings of the eagle, and the days shall be ended. God shall exalt thee and bring thee to the starry heavens, the place of His habitation. Thou shalt look from on high and behold thy adversaries on the earth. Thou shalt know them, and rejoice and give thanks, and acknowledge thy Creator.

This fine passage was written shortly after the angel

appeared to the shepherds and while Joseph and the Virgin Mother were hurrying the Divine Child to Egypt.

The phrase (his) "hands shall be filled" is an Old Testament one (Ex. xxviii., 41) for the anointing and appointing of a priest; and the Messenger or Angel reminds us of The Angel of Great Counsel, the name given by Isaias (ix., 6) to the Messias who was to come. The passage in its wording reminds us strongly of Our Lord's description of His own second coming in Matthew, Mark and Luke, and one wonders whether Our Lord in His description did not purposely use words already known to His audience in connection with the coming of the Messias. In a writing called the *Parables of Enoch,* written shortly before, or shortly after, the birth of Christ, the Seer is allowed to gaze into the dwelling-place of the just, and there, he says: "My eyes saw the Elect One of Righteousness and Fidelity, and righteousness reigns in his days, and the just and the elect ones are numberless before him, world without end. I saw His dwelling place under the wings of the Lord of Spirits; all the just and the elect shine before Him as the brilliancy of fire." And again: "In that day My Elect One (saith the Lord) shall sit upon a throne of glory and he shall decide between the acts of men, and their places of rest shall be numberless and their soul shall be strengthened within them. In that day I shall make My Elect One dwell amongst them, and I shall transform the heavens, I shall transform the dry land and make it into a blessing, and there shall I make My Elect One dwell."

This Elect One at first sight is the Messias, but it is a heavenly One, not one on earth, for nowhere is

mention made of his birth or origin, and, in fact, he exercises no function on earth. He is the Judge of heaven and earth, yea, of the holy angels. He presides in heaven over the family of the Elect, He is close to God, so close that He is more than human and shares something of the glory of the Lord of Spirits. He is what we know Christ shall be at the last judgment, and in heaven with the saved. This Elect One is again and again named "Son of Man," and fulfils the rôle of the Son of Man in Daniel, but this assimilation of the Elect One with the "Son of Man" may be an interpolation of a later writer, possibly a Christian, but probably a Jew. The similarity in phraseology with the Gospels is so striking that most people see some interdependence.

The Jews of Our Lord's day in Palestine had, as indeed they still have to-day almost unchanged, the so-called "Eighteen Prayers" or "Shmone 'Ezre." It was and has been for 2,000 years *the* Prayer of Jewry. No. 14 of this famous Litany reads: "Be merciful, O Lord our God, in Thy great mercy on Israel Thy people, and on Jerusalem Thy city, and upon Zion the dwelling place of Thy glory, and upon Thy temple, and upon Thy tabernacle, and upon the kingdom of the House of David, Thy righteous Messiah. Blessed art Thou, O Lord the God of David, who buildest Jerusalem." After the fall of Jerusalem they somewhat altered another supplication, and to-day it reads: "In Thy mercy return to Jerusalem Thy city and dwell in the midst of her. In Thy mercy dwell again as Thou hast promised, and rebuild her in the midst of our days, an everlasting building! And hasten to set up in her midst the throne of David. Blessed art Thou, who buildest Jerusalem. The

Sprout of David, Thy servant, make haste to let it sprout forth and let his horn be raised up in Thy salvation, for unto Thy salvation we are waiting all the day."

The Eighteen Prayers were of considerable length, and, as every devout Jew was bound to repeat them often, Jewish piety had drawn up a shorter form and Jewish casuistry had decided that in precise cases, when a Jew was pressed for time, he might substitute the following ejaculatory prayers instead. These went by the name of "Habbinenu." One "Habbinenu" goes back at least to c. 200 A.D. "May all those that trust in Thee rejoice in the building of Thy city and in the restoration of Thy Holy House and in the sprouting of David, Thy Servant. Thou hearest a prayer before it is uttered, let Thy answer forestall the cry to Thee." Another "Habbinenu" is still more explicit: "May they rejoice in the sprouting of the horn of David, Thy servant, and the ordering of a lamp for the Son of Jesse, Thy Messias." On New Year's day they added a prayer to God "to make haste and let it be in their day": "Bimmehera beyameynu." Alas, then they added the curse against those who believed the Messias had come: "May the apostates have no hope and may the empire of pride be swiftly rooted up in our days, may Nazareans (Christians) and heretics perish in a moment, may they be struck from the book of life, and not be counted among the just. Blessed art thou who humblest the proud."

In the most beautiful of the Apocrypha, the so-called fourth book of Esdras, which contains many sublime thoughts of a Jew about twenty years after the fall of Jerusalem, the Lion of the tribe of Judah,

the root of Jesse, as St. John and St. Paul called Christ in those very days, is described as destroying the Eagle of the Roman Empire. In Chapter XII., vv. 31-35, we read:

"The lion, whom thou sawest rising up out of the wood and roaring and speaking to the eagle and rebuking her for her unrighteousness and all her words which thou hast heard: this is the Messias, whom the Most High hath kept unto the end of days, who shall spring up out of the seed of David, and he shall come and speak unto them for their wickedness and their unrighteousness, and shall heap up before them their contemptuous dealings. For at the first he shall set them alive in his judgment, and when he hath reproved them, he shall destroy them. For the rest of my people shall be delivered with mercy, those that have been preserved throughout my borders, and he shall make them joyful until the coming of the end, even the day of judgment."

Another vision came, still more wonderful:

"Lo there arose a wind from the sea and it moved all the waves therof. And the wind caused to come up from the midst of the sea as it were the likeness of a man, and I beheld, and lo, that man flew with the clouds of heaven, and when he turned his countenance to look, all this trembled. Whensoever he spoke all burned who heard his voice like as the wax melteth when it feeleth the fire."

Then a vast multitude makes war "on the man who came out of the sea." As he saw the assault of the multitude that came, he neither lifted up his hand nor held a spear, but he sent out from his lips a flaming breath, and from his tongue as it were sparks of a storm. And only dust of ashes and smell of smoke remained of the multitude. Then he is met by a peaceful multitude of his followers. God explains to the seer: "My Son shall be revealed, whom thou

sawest as a man ascending." And much more which belongs to the greatest passages of Jewish literature.

The Jews rose throughout the Roman world some ten years after this Apocalypse was written. The revolt started in Alexandria, where the Jews formed about one-third of the population. The Greeks of the city finally repressed the rebellion, but at the cost of the city itself, which was practically reduced to ruins. Driven from the Egyptian capital, the Jews of the country parts combined with the Jews of what is now Tripoli and began a war of extermination. Led by a certain Andrew, they massacred the Romans and the Greeks, boiled their corpses, made themselves girdles of their entrails, smeared themselves with their blood, and clothed themselves in their skins. They sawed many in two, head downwards, threw them to the wild beasts, or made them kill themselves in gladiatorial shows, and thus they massacred two hundred and twenty thousand. In Egypt and in Cyprus they did the same; in Cyprus they had a leader called Artemion and destroyed four hundred and twenty thousand people. Marcus Turbo repressed the rebellion in Africa in 116 A.D. The Emperor Trajan, fearing that the rebellion would spread to Mesopotamia, another great centre of Jewry, sent the General Quietus to drive the Jewish population away. Quietus killed 10,000 of them, and when he had finished his task, he was made Procurator of Judæa itself. Though details fail us for Judæa, the Mishna counts the War of Quietus among the great national calamities.

Sixteen years later came the final war of extermination of the Jewish Nation. In 70 A.D. Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed but some semblance

of national existence remained. In the war of 132-135 A.D. the Romans decided to make an end of it. The Jews, led by a pseudo-Messias, The Son of the Star, as he was styled, fought with the heroism of despair. The pseudo-Messias was supported by their most famous Rabbi, Akiba, who died a martyr for his cause. The Romans, realizing that a pitched battle with people driven by fanaticism and despair was a dangerous thing, avoided great encounters and cautiously proceeded to reduce the country. For the Jews it was the age of martyrs. The Romans gradually reduced 50 fortresses; 285 villages and towns were occupied, and 580,000 Jews fell in battle, and many others perished by hunger, pestilence or fire. The war was so bitter that the Emperor summoned the best Roman general of the day, Julius Severus, from Britain to see it through; and when after three years the war was won, in the report to the Senate the Emperor dared not use the usual formula: "The army and I are well," for the losses of the Roman Legions had been too serious. The last Messias perished miserably at Bether, near Jerusalem.

## CHAPTER II

### A VIRGIN SHALL CONCEIVE

St. Matthew, telling the story of the virgin birth, says: "Now all this came to pass that it might be fulfilled what the Lord spoke by the prophet saying: Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."

This text of Isaias (ch. vii., 14) ever since has been one of the most outstanding passages of the Old Testament cherished in the memory of Christians. They lovingly dwelt on the ancient prophecy as a marvellous prediction of the mystery which was fulfilled more than seven hundred years afterwards. In our own days, alas, in modernist circles, it has become the custom to set this Old Testament passage aside as having no reference to the birth of the Messias, and as being misapplied by St. Matthew, who is said often to be misled by superficial resemblance of sounds and words between passages in the Old Testament and New Testament occurrences. Let us study this matter a little and see whether the First Evangelist was indeed so utterly mistaken in applying the words of Isaias to the birth of Christ.

We shall begin by studying the context. Ahaz, King of Juda, was in the year 734 B.C. attacked by the allied kings of Israel and Syria. The purpose of this hostile alliance was to dethrone the House of David

in Jerusalem and set up instead some puppet king, who should favour a big Syrian confederacy against the ever-encroaching power of the Assyrian Empire. It was a moment of supreme danger to the dynasty of David, as the two Kings of Samaria and Damascus would not find it difficult to crush Juda. None the less, Ahaz prepared for the siege of Jerusalem and his first concern was to secure the water supply to the city. Then he conceived the desperate plan of invoking the very King of Assyria, the dreaded tyrant of Western Asia, to come and save him from his foes. This meant becoming a vassal of the Assyrian Emperor, but better a vassal-king than no king at all, thought Ahaz. It meant the loss of independence for Juda, but also the saving of the throne of David, though in a subordinate position.

Isaias, accompanied by his little son, goes to meet Ahaz at the conduit of the upper pool in the way of the fuller's field, and bids him be of good cheer, and put all his trust in Jehovah, but Jehovah pledges his word the two enemy kings shall not succeed. Only if Ahaz will believe and trust Jehovah shall his dynasty continue. Let him ask a sign from Jehovah, his God, in heaven above or in the world below. But Ahaz said:

"I will not ask, nor will I put Jehovah to the test." Then spoke Isaias: "Hear, therefore, O House of David, is it not enough for you to weary men, that you must weary my God also? Therefore Jehovah Himself shall give you a sign: Let the Maiden be with child and bear her son and call his name Emmanuel; frugal fare shall he eat when he comes to the years of discretion, for before the child come to the years of discretion the land shall be desolate. And thou, who shudderest before these two kings, Jehovah shall bring upon thee and upon thy people

and upon thy dynasty times such as have not been since Israel broke away from Juda [after Solomon's death] even that very king of Assyria [whom thou now callest to thy aid.] Yes, they shall come those Egyptians and Assyrians now bidden to come to your assistance! These so-called allies will live on the fat of the land till it is left impoverished, destitute, desolate!"

The above is a free translation, which brings out the precise meaning of the prophecy. To "eat butter and honey" instead of corn and wine means to lead a life of poverty and penury. To "refuse evil and choose good" means to come to the years of discretion. What, then, is the real prophecy? Within less than half a dozen years calamities untold shall befall this land and the Davidic dynasty.

Isaias came to bring a blessing and he left a curse. The gracious sign offered by Jehovah was changed into a sign of anger. Ahaz would not trust Jehovah, but put his trust in the Assyrians. The Assyrians he shall have, but these so-called allies shall bring him and his dynasty and his country the direst calamities. Were the Maiden Mother of the Messias, the Great Son of David, now to bring forth her child and call his name "God with us" he would grow up in poverty, for ere he could reach boyhood, the land will be devastated by your Assyrian allies!

That this is the meaning of the prophecy is not only plain from the immediate context, but can also be gathered from other Messianic passages in Isaias. In the next chapter we read:

> For as much as this people has despised
> The waters of Shiloah flowing slowly,
> And as it trembles before Rezin
> And before the son of Remaliah,
> Therefore Jehovah brings against it

The waters of the River large and mighty:
Assur's King and all his glory!
It shall break all its dykes,
It shall go over all its banks,
It shall pour over Juda, invade it, overflow it;
Its waters shall rise reaching to the neck,
And then as with arms outstretched
It shall cover all *thy* land,
O IMMANUEL.
Know this, o people, you shall be undone.
Understand, all of you, people from afar,
Arm yourselves, you shall be undone.
Arm yourselves, but you shall be undone.
Prepare your plans, they shall come to nought;
Think out your scheme, it shall not hold,
Because of IMMANUEL.

The meaning of this prophecy is plain. The waters of Shiloah signify the small rivulet which supplied Jerusalem with water. Rezin is the King of Syria. The son of Remaliah is the King of Samaria. The river is the Euphrates where the Assyrians come from. The Jews refused to trust in Jerusalem, Jehovah's city; they trembled before the allies, and appealed to the people of the Great River. Alas, the Great River will flood the land of Emmanuel! Yet, proud Assyrians, your scheme to destroy the land of Jehovah shall not succeed, do what you may, you cannot bring it to utter ruin, because of Emmanuel. This Emmanuel is the Child of the Virgin Mother, referred to in the previous prophecy. It is the divine Owner and Redeemer of the Holy Land. David's dynasty and David's nation cannot be quite destroyed, because of the Great Son of David yet to come, whose name is God-with-us.

Isaias foreknew that the Assyrians would do untold harm in Palestine. The tramp of their armies would

stamp out almost every sign of life from its wretched soil, but it would not be for ever. The Jews would be as slaves cringing before their Assyrian masters, but the dark days would pass away; beyond the darkness Isaias saw the light. Thus he sings of it in the next chapter:

The people who walked in darkness
Has seen a great light;
On the inhabitants of an earth of shadows
A great light has shone.
God, thou hast made many their joys
Thou hast made great their delight.
Man is glad before Thee as at harvest time
As men rejoice sharing the spoil!
For the yoke that weighed upon him,
And the slave-collar on his shoulder,
And the stick of his slave-driver,
Thou hast broken them as in the day of Midian!
For every soldier's boot on noisy march
And every soldier's cloak besmirched with blood
Shall be for a burning
And fuel for the fire!
For a Child is born to us
A Son has been given to us!
The princedom rests on His shoulders
And they shall give Him the name:
Wonder-Councillor,
Hero God,
Father for ever,
Prince of Peace!
To increase the Princedom
And for peace without end
On the throne of David
And in his kingdom;
To strengthen it and to confirm it
In right and in justice
For now and for ever.
The zeal of Jehovah of Hosts
Shall bring it about!

The reference to the Great Son of David is unmistakable, and again it is His birth that is emphasized, for no one can fail to see in the Child that is born, the Son that is given, the offspring of the Maiden-Mother, whose name is Emmanuel.

To refuse to see the Messias in the Virgin's Son is to close one's eyes to what stands broadly written throughout the Prophet Isaias.

And not only Isaias.

It is most important to note that there lived another prophet, a contemporary of Isaias, Micheas, who prophesied but a few miles away from Jerusalem, not many years after the great prophecy of Isaias was uttered. He too lays stress on the miraculous birth. The Great Woman is to bear a Child, for whom all Israel is waiting. It is the Son of David to be born in David's City.

> As for thee, O Bethlehem Ephratah,
> Small amongst the cities of Juda,
> Out of thee shall come to me
> He that is to be Ruler of Israel;
> Whose origin is of old
> And goes back to the days of yore!
> That is why God delivers them up
> Till the day when She, who will bear, shall bear;
> When the rest of His brethren shall return
> With the brethren of Israel.
> He shall maintain Himself as Shepherd
> With the might of Jehovah
> In the glory of the name of Jehovah, His God.
> They shall return, for in that day
> He shall be great to the very ends of the earth,
> And He shall be peace!

We submit that when the Jew Matthew two thousand years ago applied Isaias vii., 14, to the

birth of the Messiah, he understood his Hebrew Prophets better than some moderns do.

But let us listen to the objections which the Modernists make.

They say the birth of the Messias, which was to happen seven hundred years afterwards, could be no sign to Ahaz, and Isaias promised him a sign. Prophets deal with things of importance to their own contemporaries, not with distant miracles to occur after seven centuries!

We answer that we do not for a moment allow that prophets must always prophesy things of the immediate future and could not at times foresee through God's grace, things to happen ages later.

As a matter of fact Isaias' prophecy, as we have translated it, has a bearing also on contemporary events. Our translation, which is substantially Père Condamin's, connects the distant and the immediate future. And this translation seems the only reasonable one. Whether we give to the Hebrew word *hinneh,* which is translated *behold* in the Douay, the direct value of the Arabic *'inn* (if); or whether we leave it its usual meaning of behold, does not very much matter. The sense remains the same: lo, the Maiden is with child and bears a Son and calls Him Emmanuel, but He grows up in hunger and distress; for ere He grow up, the land will be devastated.

God had sworn to David that his dynasty should be an eternal one. Ahaz ought to have realized that if these Kings of Samaria and Damascus tried to destroy David's dynasty, they would only waste their strength, for God would not break His oath to David. Ahaz' security lay in the oath of the King of Kings, but he trusted in the King of Assyria instead. God

shall keep His word. The Great Son of David, the flower of David's dynasty, is sure to come; the Maiden shall conceive and bear her Son, and call Him rightly Emmanuel; none the less ere He could come to man's estate and the years of discretion, the Holy Land shall be a howling wilderness! This interpretation renders the whole passage intelligible, every other attempted interpretation involves obscurities, and impossibilities, whether the child is supposed to be Ahaz' son Ezechias, or Isaias' son; or the son of a woman standing by, or any child of any woman, who was pregnant at that time.

If any woman, who might be with child at the time, how can we account for the article *the* Maiden? How can we account for the other passages in Isaias and Micheas? How can we account for the word Maiden or Virgin? " A Maiden with child " is a striking phrase to use of any chance person who might be expecting motherhood.

And now we come to the objection most frequently raised.

The Hebrew word *Almah* is supposed not to mean a virgin, but merely a young woman of marriageable age. But the Jews themselves before the days of Christ in their so-called Septuagint translation, when they were without any bias, translated it by the Greek word *parthenos,* the strictest Greek term for an untouched virgin. They themselves rendered: *H parthenos egkuei* (The virgin is with child). They could not have used more unequivocal terms. Later on, indeed, after Christ, when they rejected the version which once they thought inspired, they translated *neanis* (young woman). Surely we have a right to trust the ancient Jews rather than the later ones,

whose anti-Christian bias is unmistakable. So, likewise, the Syriac translation, made probably by Jews about the time of Christ, though perhaps re-edited by Christians, renders it by the strict term for a virgin, *bethulah*.

The word *almah* occurs six times besides in the Old Testament. One thing is quite certain, it signifies not any young woman, but an *unmarried* young woman.

In Gen. xxiv., 43, it is used in the prayer of Abraham's servant, waiting for Rebecca, "a beautiful virgin and not known to man." In Exod. ii., 3, it refers to the Moses' young sister Mary. In Canticles i., 3, and vi., 8, we read: "Thy name is as oil poured out, therefore young maidens love thee"; and again, "queens, concubines, maidens"; where the word evidently means unmarried persons in contrast to queens and concubines. In Ps. lxviii., 26, it refers to maidens playing the timbrel amongst the singers at the sanctuary, where married women are obviously out of place. In Prov. xxx., 19, there is reference to "the way of a man with a maid," as being secret and untraceable. Evidently an unmarried woman is meant, for the way of a man with his wife is not untraceable, and besides sinful married women are contrasted with maidens.

It cannot therefore be gainsaid that the word called up in the Hebrew mind the idea of an *unmarried* woman. But if so, could the prophet possibly have meant that an unmarried woman should conceive by sinful intercourse and call her son Emmanuel? The very thought is blasphemous and absurd.

Modernists try to obscure this by saying that merely a marriageable young woman is meant, without any stress on the fact that she is unmarried, but

the six passages just quoted make it clear that an *unmarried* young woman is meant. True, there is another Hebrew word, *bethulah,* which lays more stress on physical virginity as such, as it can be used of a virgin, whether young or aged. But *almah* is clearly a poetical and more dignified word, resembling in use and meaning our English word, maiden.

But again, they insist, the etymology of the word shows that not virginity, but maturity is involved. In support of this contention they appeal to the Arabic cognate word *galamah* which has this meaning, and say that this root evidently underlies the two Hebrew words *elem,* young man, and *almah,* young woman.

Now, it is highly doubtful whether the Arabic root has for fundamental meaning "maturity," it has rather the sense of "youth" and "immaturity"; it is used of plants as being green, juicy, undergrown, and of persons under age rather than of age.

But even were it so, that *alam* in primitive Semitic, originally, before the separation of the different Semitic languages, did mean to be mature, that is of no interest to us. In German to-day "*Jungfrau*" means etymologically "young woman," but it is none the less the strict technical term for *virgin* in that language. Our Lady is called "*die heilige Jungfrau,*" and "*Jungfraeulichkeit*" is virginity. The very word *virgo* in Latin does not mean etymologically a woman who knoweth not man; none the less it strictly meant a virgin on the lips of the Romans. If all that is meant be only, "the young woman shall conceive," why the use of this strange term *almah,* in such strange contrast to the following words, "be with child"? Why not the usual word

*na'arah* (a girl, a young person)? Why not *ishshah* (a woman)? or *nkeba* (a female)? Why should a person, who is only mentioned on account of her function of motherhood, be precisely designated as "a maiden"? Were not pre-Christian Jews and St. Matthew justified in seeing a mystery and rendering the original by *parthenos?*

It may be asked how did the Jews of Our Lord's own day look upon this text? What origin did they ascribe to the Messias?

On the one hand they certainly believed him to be a descendant of David; on the other hand they knew some mystery would surround his origin.

It was actually objected against Our Lord that He could not be the Messias because everyone knew whence He came; He was the son of Joseph the Carpenter and people knew His brethren and sisters! In large circles undoubtedly the Messias was thought of as pre-existing with God before his entrance into, or at least his appearance in, this world. He was hidden with God, to appear in some totally unexpected way.

Did the Jews have some inkling of the truth that the Messias was to be virgin-born?

The question is very difficult to answer, mainly owing to lack of information.

There can be no doubt that Judaism, almost at once after Our Lord's Resurrection, became intensely anti-Christian and would deliberately avoid anything which might support the claims of Christianity. The bitter animus of Jewry against Christendom during the first two centuries of its existence is a striking phenomenon in history. Now the oldest extant Jewish literature began to be gathered in the latter part

of the second century, and it would naturally contain but little which could favour Christianity in any possible way. The claim of virgin-birth, made for Jesus of Nazareth, would turn almost any rabbi to the search for another interpretation of the Scripture-text in question, or at least to the avoidance of the point in literature. From the absence of an opinion in post-Christian Jewish literature, we cannot argue to its absence in New Testament times.

There are, however, as a matter of fact, remarkable indications of the existence of a belief in a miraculous birth of the Messias, even in comparatively late Jewish works; and these may well be the few remnants of a belief more largely held before antagonism to Christianity made Jews avoid anything which might sound Christian.

Such passages have been gathered by Christian authors, and have been sometimes described as mere Christian forgeries or distortions of the text, but without sufficient reason. The idea of a virgin-birth of the Messias was apparently not alien to some Jewish minds, though it is impossible now to say whether the opinion was widely held.

True, the actual text in Isaias, "A virgin shall conceive," etc., is nowhere in extant Jewish literature applied to the virgin birth of the Messias. Post-Christian Jewish commentators deliberately excluded this interpretation ever since the substitution of *neanis* (young woman) for *parthenos* (virgin) in Aquila's Greek translation.

The more remarkable is the fact that the mysterious *text of Jeremias xxxi., 22 :* "Return, O virgin of Israel, for the Lord hath created a new thing upon earth : a woman shall encompass a man," as also

the text in *Judges v., 8:* "I arose a mother in Israel, God chooseth new things, then is a taking of gates," is understood as a divine promise that as Israel fell in a virgin, so in a virgin should she be healed.

In Bereshith Rabba 89 and in the Midrash on Lamentations it is distinctly pointed out: "the man encompassed is King Messiah, of whom God spake: 'This day I have begotten thee.'" The newness or strangeness of the Messiah's birth is likewise brought out in a Midrash on *Psalm ii., 7:* "When Messiah's hour is come, God saith: I will beget him with a new creation." With regard to the same text Saadiah asked: "In what manner shall the nativity be of the Messiah?" and using the phraseology of the famous *Psalm 110,* the *Dixit Dominus,* he answers: "from the womb as dew from the morning." The same occurs in a Midrash on the *Psalm 110* itself: "From the womb of the morning thou hast the dew of thy nativity." In a Midrash on *Psalm 85,* as commentary on verse 11, "Truth springeth from the earth and righteousness hath looked down from heaven," we read as follows: "Why is it said: 'springeth,' instead of 'is born'? Because Messiah's birth shall not be as the nativity of creatures that are in the world, but diverse and different, without companionship or conjunction. And none names his father, for he shall be hidden until he come and reveal himself to us. The word of the Eternal gives the blessing and earth yields the germ."

The same sort of mysterious origin is assigned to the Messiah in a Midrash on *Lamentations v., 3:* "We are orphans and without father." We read: "and the Redeemer also whom I will send, shall be

without father, as it is written: A plant out of a dry ground (Is. liii., 2) and: The branch shall grow up out of its place" (Zach. vi., 12). The application of this text to Esther, an orphan without father and mother and a woman who saved her people, is a weird misuse of the words.

St. Paul's idea of Christ as a second Adam seems to be a remnant of his early training under Rabbi Gamaliel, for the thought was not alien to Jewry. In Bereshith Rabba 23 it is asked in connection with Eve's words on the birth of Seth: "God hath appointed me another seed in place of Abel," "What is this seed which comes from another place? It is King Messiah!" Curiously enough, the words are found again in a commentary on *Ruth iv., 19,* in the middle of a Davidic or Messianic genealogy, and the words recur in a comment on the incest of Lot's daughters. In a reference to *Thamar's* sin with Judah, it is said in Bereshith Rabba 85: "Judah was only busy about a wife, but God was busy about the creation of the Messiah." The expression "from another place" seems almost to mean "out of wedlock," and Thamar and Ruth are also emphasized as ancestresses of the Messiah in St. Matthew. In the case of Eve and Ruth, however, it certainly does not mean "out of wedlock," but rather a special direct interference of God's Providence in securing the Messianic line from Eve to the Second Adam.

Philo, an exact contemporary of Our Blessed Lord, arguing from the fact that in the Bible the birth of Abel is not preceded by the notice that Adam had marital intercourse with Eve, whereas the birth of Cain is, and that such silence is also observed in the case of other biblical personages, as, for instance,

Isaac, says that God caused some women to be pregnant without any action on the part of their husbands.

All this shows that in New Testament times the idea of a miraculous birth of the Messias was not so foreign to the Jewish mind as is sometimes supposed, and certainly some mysteriousness of origin was widely attributed to his nativity. If, then, Isaias vii., 17, is not connected by them with the birth of Christ it is they, the Jews, rather than we Christians, who have changed the traditional interpretation of that famous prophecy.

# CHAPTER III

## JOHN THE BAPTIST

These sayings were noised abroad in all the hill country of Judæa, and all that heard them laid them up in their heart, saying: What, then, is this child to be? For the hand of God was still with him. And his father was filled with the Holy Ghost and prophesied, saying: Thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Most High: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to make ready His ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto His people in the remission of their sins. And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.

So does St. Luke describe the childhood and youth of St. John the Baptist. The lovely pictures by Raphael and numberless other artists of St. John as a child playing with Jesus are the outcome of artistic imagination rather than of historical deduction from the Gospel accounts. The flight into Egypt and the return to Nazareth make it not very likely that the Infant Saviour often played with His cousin, who stayed in the hill country of Judæa. If He ever did, St. John must have forgotten the days of his childhood, for he twice, in so many words, states that he did not know Our Lord before His baptism.

St. John was a wonder-child. He was the child of aged parents, so aged that his father could not bring himself to believe, even at an angel's voice, that he and his childless wife could still have offspring. No

doubt, long before he reached man's estate his parents were dead. He had neither brother nor sister. He was to be a prophet, so the angel had said; he was to be a preacher of penance before the coming of the Messias. In token of his calling, never, not even in that country where the vine flourished luxuriantly, was wine or strong drink to pass his lips. He was dedicated to God. The neighbours looked on him with awe: What is this child to be? A thousand years before, Anna, Elcana's wife, had brought the little Samuel to the Sanctuary at Shilo, to Heli, the high priest, to become a page-boy of Jehovah. Though John was a priest, and no doubt ministered in the Temple in his turn, as his father had done, John's parents knew his destiny was not merely a priestly vocation, but the life of a prophet. We gather that, in early years, in the days of his boyhood, he was marked out for that office. We read of the boy Samuel that he "ministered before the face of the Lord: being a child girded with a linen ephod. And his mother made him a little coat which she brought to him on appointed days, when she went up with her husband to offer a solemn sacrifice." The boy John had no need of a linen ephod or any miniature priestly garment, for he was to be a new Elias: "a man with a garment of hair and a girdle of leather about his loins," as is written in the Book of Kings. "He was in the deserts," he lived in the bleakest part of the hill country of Judæa, south-east of Jerusalem, away from the haunts of men, where one of the caves in the mountain side could give shelter to the growing lad, and where he could satisfy his love of solitude. There he waxed strong in spirit. Travellers, who met the youthful hermit on the lonesome

country road, came back and told how they had spoken with a youth who had the spirit of God mightily upon him. After a while even the homely gifts of friends and the support of his people were set aside, and John lived on what chance food he could find in the hills and valleys around. Locusts and wild honey, a not uncommon but humble food of those days, satisfied him. A strip of leather round his waist, a piece of rough cloth, woven of camel's hair, over his shoulder, was enough for him. And his people left him, for did not mystery surround his birth, and was there not a strange prophecy about him? And thus he remained "till the day of his shewing to Israel."

One day at the fords of the Jordan a heedless crowd of passers-by were startled by a sudden mighty cry: "Repent ye, repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand!" Gazing in amazement, they saw this gaunt and threatening figure of the new Elias the Thesbite standing before them. The day of his shewing to Israel had come. At first, obviously, most of the hurrying multitude must have passed him by, annoyed at the unwarranted intrusion of this unsavoury personage. The days of the prophets were over. It was nice to read about them in the Book of Kings. They were so picturesque, those prophets, looked at through a distance of at least four hundred years! They were perfectly horrid in offensive proximity, with their raucous shouts and harsh cries, yelling things in your ear. Who was this man? He ought to be silenced! The crowd felt uncomfortable, a quarter of a mile off you could still hear the gloomy words: "Repent! repent!" But some stood and listened. No doubt they felt somewhat sobered and

chilled, but they came back the next day and the day after. They began to feel towards that unearthly figure a feeling akin to religious reverence. The listeners round John grew in numbers, till they could be counted in hundreds if not in thousands. They were all sorts of people gathered from the most unlikely quarters.

But John was not flattered by popularity. With a fierce outspokenness he almost seemed at times to repel the crowd.

> Ye brood of vipers, who has taught *you* to flee from the wrath to come? But since, as a matter of fact, you have come, see that ye bring fruits worthy of penance. Mere words will not suffice, do not begin to say—as if that were sufficient title to God's mercy and guarantee of your eternal salvation: "We have Abraham as our father!" For I tell you, God can from these stones raise sons to Abraham!

We learn from St. Matthew that he spoke thus to the crowd, because he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees amongst them. The simple folk were welcome, but the supercilious, self-righteous clique, that came to stare at this prodigy of the desert, the people whom no call to repentance could touch, because forsooth "they were sons of Abraham," had to listen to the stern denunciation of "brood of vipers." Even if they submitted, as many of them did, to the rite of baptism, let them not regard it as one more economy, one more magic recipe, one more formality to accept, to insure themselves against the punishment of their sins. To be baptized in the Jordan was fast becoming "the correct thing to do for a pious Jew." But let them beware; unless inner conversion accompanied by improvement of morals was there, Jews or not Jews,

the infinitely righteous God would find them out. God had no need of them, God could change the very stones into sons of Abraham, if He chose. (In English we cannot quite render the terseness and point of John's last sentence, which is based on the similarity between the words for sons and stones in Aramaic.) Let them not think that the judgment is afar off. "The avenging axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree not bearing good fruit is about to be cut down and cast into the fire."

The thunder of the oncoming doom overawed the crowd, and at least those still capable of sentiments of real sorrow asked John and said: "What, then, must we do?" And he answering, spoke: "He that has two garments, let him give one to the man who has none, and he who has food to spare, let him do the same."

Even the Publicans came to be baptized, and said to John: "Teacher, what must we do?" These despised pariahs of Jewish society expected some fearful extra penance, but they heard: "Do not exact any more than is fixed by law!" The Greek here is very characteristic; in homely English it might be rendered: Do not make something out of it for yourselves —a shilling here, a sovereign there—beyond the legal tariff.

The soldiers also came and asked: "And we, then, what have we to do?" The brief but telling answer came: "Don't molest people, have no more trumped-up charges before the authorities against innocent people; be satisfied with your pay."

Over-curious critics have tried to guess who these soldiers were. Pontius Pilate had no Jewish troops, but then he had large numbers of Samaritans, who

also claimed to be sons of Abraham, and might well have listened to the Baptist. Herod the Fox, they say, would not have had troops in the plain of the Jordan, on the side John was preaching, hence these soldiers must have been mere police attached to the Customs. Well, it may be so, but why should John never have crossed the river, or Herod's soldiers never have crossed it either? The fame of John spread throughout Palestine, and his preaching gripped the whole Jewish people. According to the Gospel, Jerusalem, *en masse,* had come out to the Jordan to be baptized, and Galilee had not been behind Judaea in its eagerness to accept this new prophet. "The word of God had come upon him" as on Isaias, Jeremias, or Amos and Osee of old. The long line of prophets, so long interrupted, was restored again. A new era had begun and the eyes of all Israel were on the happenings at the fords of the Jordan. Josephus tells that Herod realized that the people would do anything whatever at the bidding of John; he had the multitude in the hollow of his hands. The enthusiasm of the people was so great, so unrestrained, that anything might happen.

John owed the triumph of his cause not merely to his preaching. He had inaugurated a new way of life. He had formed disciples. He had taught them definite prayers. Later on Christ's disciples would ask Christ to teach them to pray, as John had taught his disciples to pray. They felt the need of some hallowed set of prayers which they could all recite, and the recital of which would form a bond between them. John had taught them prayers. John had taught them to fast, fixed and definite fastings. Later on the Jews made unfavourable comparisons: "Why did

not Jesus' disciples fast as those of John did?" John was not merely a prophet, but a leader. He said he prepared the people for some great event to come. However stern his code, however lofty the grandeur of his mind, John understood the masses, he was simple, direct, human and practical, as the answers to the questions above abundantly show.

Above all John baptized. No prophet before him had baptized. John claimed that God had told him to baptize. He referred to God as "He who sent me to baptize." It was his divine mission, given to him from above. Even to his contemporaries he was known as "John the Baptizer." It was this baptism which set the seal on his discipleship.

In a sense baptisms, or rather religious bathings and washings, were well known to the Jews. Probably in the days of John there existed already the so-called "baptism of the proselytes." When a man came to Judaism he was circumcised, was baptized, and offered a sacrifice. But there are five points which characterize John's baptism and makes it distinct from any levitical bath of purification. *First,* John's baptism was administered once for all. It was a unique ceremony, not a possibly frequent washing, occasioned by some levitical impurity. *Secondly,* it was not self-administered. In Jewish washings, even those of proselytism, the person concerned did everything himself, there could be no question of a minister, but at most only of a witness. John, on the contrary, it was who baptized his penitents, not they themselves. It was essential that John should dip them under, or pour the water over their heads. *Thirdly,* John's baptism had no direct connection with levitical legal defilement, but with sin. Levitical

uncleanness was, in principle at least, independent of any moral guilt. One could incur it by mere chance physical contact, without any fault whatever, hence penitence or sorrow was no requisite for any levitical washing. John's baptism was the outward sign of an inward moral disposition and claimed results in the moral order. *Fourthly,* it was administered while or after the person confessed his sins. The outward public confession of sin was the accompaniment of the symbolic act of being baptized. It was emphatically "of repentance unto remission of sin." It was the coping stone of the resolutions to abandon sin and start a new life. *Lastly,* it was an act of preparation for a great event to come. It was a getting ready for the kingdom of God, which was at hand. Even if John at first did not know who the Messias was, his baptism was from the very first a preparation for the coming of the Messias. It was therefore also a public profession of faith. How far this baptism was sacramental and gave grace is a question not for Scripture students, but for theologians to settle.

All Israel, then, came to be baptized? No, not quite all. The high priests, the scribes, and the elders at Jerusalem did not come. Christ once said to them: "I will ask you one question, and answer Me and I will tell you by what authority I do what I do. The baptism of John, was it from heaven or from men? Answer Me!"

But they thought within themselves: If we say from heaven, He will say: Why, then, did you not believe in him? If we say from men, the whole people will stone us, for they are convinced that John is a prophet. So they said: "We do not know." Thus anyone denying that John was a prophet was in

danger of being lynched by the crowd. According to St. Luke, the crowd was from day to day on tip-toe of expectation for further developments, and all began to argue within themselves about John: "Is he not himself the Messias?"

John, however, said to all and sundry: "I baptize you with water, but someone mightier than I is coming, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to loose; He will baptize you in the Holy Ghost and fire." Then suddenly thrilled by the imminence of his Master's coming, the coming of the Judge of the world, John uses a simple expression that all may understand. They all know of the harvester standing on the threshing-floor, on which the oxen have already trodden out the corn. The man is wielding his winnowing ladle, throwing the corn on high so that the heavy grains may fall on one side and the flimsy chaff on the other. "There stands the Divine Harvester, His winnowing fan is in His hands, ready to clear His threshing floor, to gather the wheat in His barn, and the chaff—He will burn it in unquenchable fire!"

But the person of his Redeemer and Judge, John did not yet know. Then the God Who sent him to baptize in water gave him a sign: "On whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon Him, it is He who baptizes in the Holy Ghost."

John waited and scanned the multitudes as they came and went, in the hope of some token. Then Jesus came to be baptized. No sooner did Our Lord approach, but some inner light revealed to John His supreme sanctity, His utter sinlessness, His overpowering greatness, and John shrank back from the seeming incongruity that he should baptize Him. He tried to prevent Him, saying: "I have need to be

baptized by Thee, and Thou comest to me?" The bold and stern denouncer of sins, the mighty prophet, conscious of his divine calling, is of a sudden conscious of his inferiority, his imperfections, his own need of purification in the presence of this New Comer, who asks for baptism. The revelation as to who He is was not at once complete, but will be a few moments later. "Let it be so now," answered Jesus, "for thus it is becoming for us to fulfil all righteousness." It is true Jesus had not to ask for forgiveness of sin, but He could fulfil all righteousness, every act of piety required of a son of Israel, every act of preparation for the kingdom to come must be performed by the Son of Man, who ushers in the New Covenant with God. It is becoming *for us*. Jesus did not say *for Me*. You will baptize and I will be baptized, and thus we will both—(with divine courtesy towards His Forerunner it was spoken)—fulfil the eternal counsel of God.

Then John let Him, and Jesus entered the waters and prayed. And John's hands baptized Him, and Jesus forthwith left the waters. And as He went out of the water, He saw the heavens opened and the Spirit of God coming down in the bodily form of a dove upon Him, and heard a voice from the heavens saying: "Behold, My beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased." And John saw the Spirit descending as a dove from heaven and abiding upon Jesus.

A careful comparison of the four Gospel texts, narrating the event, would seem to warrant the following conclusions. It was Christ who saw the heavens opened, and the Holy Ghost descending, and heard the voice of the Father. The words spoken were probably those quoted above, that is, they were directly

addressed to Christ and only indirectly to St. John. St. Mark and St. Luke both write: "Thou art My beloved Son." St. Matthew, however: "This is My beloved Son." If in the original Aramaic, some word like "behold" or "lo" preceded the words "beloved Son," the two renderings are sufficiently accounted for. St. Mark and St. Luke render "In Thee I am well pleased," which rendering is thus better accredited than St. Matthew's "In Whom I am well pleased."

St. John does not expressly state that he heard the voice, only that he saw the descent of the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove, and that he knew by revelation that the descent of the Holy Ghost indicated the promised Messias. None the less it seems obvious from the text of the Synoptics that St. John saw the heavens opened and heard the voice. The mere outward form of a dove in the sky would not have been regarded by St. John as a revelation of God and the symbol of the Holy Ghost.

All, or almost all, the Apostles of Our Lord were once disciples of St. John, hence it is natural that they should have heard the story of this manifestation from the lips of both Our Lord and St. John, hence the Evangelists, in re-telling the story, left indications of both their informants. St. Augustine points out very truly that the purpose of the vision was not to show Jesus what He already knew, but that those who were present might hear.

John then knew, but he would not or could not retain the Saviour near him. The Messias and His Forerunner immediately parted; either went his way to fulfil all justice. John continued to baptize, but Jesus gathered disciples, and they too began to

baptize at the behest of Jesus. But we are anticipating.

The incredible stir which John's baptism was causing throughout Judaea alarmed the Jerusalem authorities. They looked askance at the irresistible influence exercised over immense multitudes. They sent a deputation to take official cognizance of the happenings at Bethania, where John was baptizing, and to investigate his claims. Priests and Levites of the Pharisaic party came and asked: "Who art thou?" And John confessed and did not deny, and he willingly confessed: "I am not the Messias." And they asked again: "What, then, art thou Elias, the expected herald of the coming Messias, as stands written in the Book of Malachy?" And he said: "No." "Art thou the prophet, then, like unto Moses, foretold in the Book of Deuteronomy?" And he said: "No!" These curt answers disconcerted the priests, and they said: "Who art thou, that we may give some answer to those who sent us, what sayest thou of thyself?"

John realized that their question was fair and just, yet his humility shrank from a description of his claims. He sought in the Scriptures some words that should show the insignificance of his person and the greatness of his message, and there flashed across his mind the superb glory of this passage of Isaias:—

Be comforted, my people,
Be comforted, says your God.
Speak of good cheer to Jerusalem
And do cry unto her:
Her penal days are completed,
Her guilt is pardoned,
She has received from Jahveh's hands
Double for all her crimes.

Hark! Some one crying:
Prepare in the desert the road for Jahveh,
Make straight in the wilderness a way for God!
Every valley must be raised,
Every mount and hill made even,
Let the crooked be made straight,
And the rough ways plain!
Then Jahveh's glory shall be manifest,
And all mankind together shall see it.
It is the mouth of Jahveh that said it!

Hark! Some one saying: Cry!
And I said: What shall I cry?
All flesh is like unto grass,
All its glory as a flower in the field.
The grass does wither, the flower fades
When Jahveh's breath passes over it.
But the grass may wither, the flower fade;
The word of God shall stand for ever.

Climb to a high mountain,
Thou that tellest good tidings to Sion,
Raise thy voice to the utmost
Thou bringer of good news to Jerusalem.
Raise your voice to the utmost,
Say to the cities of Juda:
Behold your God!

Behold Lord Jahveh coming in power,
His arm wielding might, as He pleases.
Behold His reward is with Him,
And His recompense goeth before Him.
As a shepherd, shepherding His flock,
With His arm gathering all together,
Carrying the lambs on His bosom,
And taking care of the ewes.

John, summing this up in a sentence, said: "I am the voice that cries: Prepare the way of the Lord, as said the Prophet Isaias."

But the priests were not yet satisfied. "Why then

dost thou baptize, if thou art neither the Christ, nor Elias, nor the Prophets?" By your baptism you claim to usher in your disciples into some kingdom that is at hand, in other words, the Kingdom of the Messias. If you are neither the Messias yourself, nor Elias, nor the prophet, what is the meaning of your baptism?

John answered and said that the real baptism ushering into the kingdom of heaven was still to come, his mere water-baptism did not open the gates of the kingdom. "I baptize in water, but in the midst of you some One stands, Whom you know not. He shall baptize you in the Holy Ghost and in fire. Some One mightier than I; it is the One who was to come after me, but who now doth already precede me; He, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to loose."

Thus spake John to the priests and Levites from Jerusalem. This sufficed, more he would not tell them. Perhaps more he dared not say. Jesus might wish to reveal Himself. He stood in no need of the Baptist's voice.

But the day after the Jerusalem deputation had gone, when John was with his disciples, he saw Jesus coming towards him, and then feeling his duty plain, he pointed Him out to his followers, saying:

> Behold the Lamb of God, Who taketh away the sins of the world! That is He of Whom I said: After me some One is coming, but now He already precedes me, for, indeed, He existed from eternity before me. But I did not know Him, I only knew that I was to baptize in water for the purpose that He should become manifest in Israel.

"The Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." Thus a whole commentary was summed

up in a few words; a mysterious chapter of Isaias rendered in a sentence. The age-long prophecy was at last being fulfilled:—

He was pierced for our transgressions,
And He was bruised for our sins.
The chastisement that saved us was laid on Him,
And by His stripes we were healed.
All we, like sheep, had gone astray.
We have turned every one our own way,
And Jahveh has laid upon Him
The iniquity of us all.
He was tormented, yet He submitted,
He opened not His mouth.
As a lamb brought to the slaughter,
As a sheep dumb in the hands of its shearers,
He opened not His mouth. . . .
The Just One, My Servant, shall justify many,
And He shall bear their iniquities.
Therefore I shall give Him the many as His share,
And with the many He shall share the spoils.
For He delivered Himself unto death,
And among sinners He was numbered,
Whereas He but carried the sins of the many,
And interceded for those who transgressed.

It seems that at first John's words were not heeded, or sufficiently understood, hence John made it quite clear:

I saw the Spirit descending as a dove, and it rested on Him. I did not know Him, but God, Who sent me to baptize in water, He said to me: On whomsoever thou seest the Spirit descending and resting on Him, He it is Who baptizes in the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and now I have given testimony that He is the Son of God.

John evidently had heard the words of the Father from heaven as well as seen the dove, hence he testified that He was "the Son of God."

Next day again John stood with two of his disciples, and looking towards Jesus passing along, he said again: "Behold the Lamb of God." And these two disciples, John and Andrew, hearing him say so, followed Jesus. Then Jesus went to Galilee and gathered more disciples, and shortly afterwards came to Judæa again. These newly-gathered disciples baptized, at Jesus' command, with a preparatory baptism like unto that of John. And as Jesus did miracles and John did not, the multitudes soon followed the Prophet from Nazareth rather than the son of Zachary. John then left the fords of the Jordan and came to Aenon near Salim, where there was abundance of water, and there he was baptizing. And people came even there and were being baptized, during the period between Christ's baptism and John's imprisonment. For a short while it might have seemed as if John and Jesus were rivals, and amongst some of the simpler followers there arose a contention. John's disciples felt hurt that people should leave their master to cleave to a new one. They appealed to their master to explain matters. They said: "Rabbi, the One that was with thee across the Jordan, to Whom thou gavest testimony, lo, He baptizes and all flock to Him!" As a matter of fact Christ personally did not baptize, but His Apostles did. John answered and said:

A man dare take nothing upon himself except what is given to him from above. You yourselves are my witnesses that I told you: I am not the Christ, but I am the one that is sent before Him. The nuptials of the Messias with His people—of Christ with His Church, of God-Incarnate with the true Israel—the nuptials have come, the bridegroom is meeting His bride. At a wedding the friends of the bridegroom bring him to the room of the bride, but then leave him and withdraw. They stand

without and wait, till they hear the shout of joy of the bridegroom, lifting the veil from the face of his bride. They cheerfully repeat his joyous cry, and then go their way. Such are our customs, and so it must be now. The Messias owns His bride. I am but the friend of the bridegroom. I have stood without and waited till I heard His voice of joy. I have heard it and my joy is full.

He must increase and I must decrease. He comes from above, and therefore He is above all. I am but from this earth, I am but mere man, and therefore my words are those of a mere man. He who comes from heaven is above all. What in heaven He has seen and heard, that He witnesses, but hardly anyone fully grasps what it means. But if any one grasps his testimony, he sets his seal to it that God, who proclaimed Him His Son, spoke true. For Christ, the Beloved Son, whom God has sent, utters the very words of God, for to Him God gives the spirit without measure. Whosoever believes in the Son hath everlasting life, who gives no faith to the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests on him.

Many scholars have attributed the latter part of these words to the Fourth Evangelist rather than to John the Baptist, but our paraphrase is an attempt to ascribe them to the Baptist. Without denying the possibility that the Fourth Gospel contains reflections of the Evangelist, we surely must restrict them unless cogent reasons force us to do otherwise.

For a while John continued to baptize, but the end was not far. Details of the capture of St. John by Herod we do not possess, but the attentive reader of the New Testament reads between the lines that John was betrayed by the Pharisees. There must have been amongst his disciples a Judas, as there was one among the Twelve. St. Matthew and St. Mark use of the imprisonment of the Baptist the significant term *betrayal*. "Christ, having heard that John was betrayed, retired into Galilee." After John was be-

trayed, Jesus went to Galilee. The colourless translation *delivered* instead of *betrayed* does not do justice to the text. That this betrayal was somehow connected with the Pharisees is not obscurely indicated in the Fourth Gospel. "As Jesus knew that the Pharisees had heard: Jesus makes more disciples and baptizes more than John, He left Judæa and went back to Galilee."

The Evangelist clearly implies that Christ, owing to the report of His success, foresaw that the Pharisees would bring on Him the fate they had brought on John, and Christ forestalled their malice by retiring to Galilee. That the Pharisees went hand in hand with the Herodians we know. The Pharisees would naturally cover their traces, hence we do not know the details of their intrigue. Officially, of course, the imprisonment was done by Herod's authority. But we last saw John in Judæa, where Herod had no power; perhaps the Pharisees warned Herod as soon as John crossed over into his territory again. The official reason given for John's imprisonment was that it was a mere preventive measure. John's immense popularity, together with the fervid expectations of the Jews, might lead to political disturbances. John's person was secured in the palace-fortress of Machaerus. He seems at first to have enjoyed a relative freedom. Herod had resented John's denunciations regarding his irregular marriage, but, as a man of the world, he came to realize that a prophet had to denounce that sort of thing. He bore no grudge, and even conversed with this prophet, whom he half dreaded, half respected. In his imprisonment John sent two of his disciples to Jesus, for John was kept well-informed about the

doings of Christ. They, at the request of their master, came to Jesus, who was at that very hour curing many diseases and plagues and evil spirits, as St. Luke tells; and they said: "John the Baptist sent us to Thee, saying: Art Thou He who is to come, or do we wait for another?"

What was in the mind of John? Did he doubt that Christ as the Messias? Inconceivable! If he had lost the faith, Christ would not forthwith have praised him as the greatest prophet born of woman. Did he only ask the question for his disciples' sake, that they might be instructed? Surely the context is against such a supposition. Though some, following St. Chrysostom, make this suggestion, it seems a wresting of the Scriptures against their plain meaning. What then?

The very eagerness for the self-revelation of Jesus as the Messias betrayed John into impatience. He knew Jesus to be the Holy Son of God, the Judge and Founder of the new and everlasting kingdom of righteousness. John's ideas of the Messianic kingdom were not the gross, unspiritual ideas of his contemporaries. The kingdom to come was one of holiness and sinlessness. None the less John somewhat misunderstood the task of the Messias. He thought of Him as the Great Judge, the Divine Harvester with the flail in His hands, the One that would smite sinners and sin, and usher in the realm of holiness. None of these things had happened. When was this baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire to come? Jesus did great marvels and wonders, so John heard in his prison. Ah! why did He not do the greatest marvel of all in pouring out the Holy Ghost in fiery flames? John was in prison and realized that naught but death

would free him. Would he, John, the Forerunner, have to die before the Messias revealed Himself, before the triumph of His kingdom? John could not restrain his impetuous desires; with bold familiarity he dared to send his two disciples to his Great Master, urging Him on. Why this delay? Art Thou the One that is to come, or perchance have we to look for another kind of Messias than the holy and triumphant Judge we have learnt to expect? Time in prison goes slow, every day was an eternity to John, death threatened, was he never to see on earth the light of the revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of his people Israel?

Some readers may be reluctant to acknowledge imperfections in John, and allow that John was *scandalized* in Our Lord. But the scandal John took was no serious sin, a moment's over-eagerness and vexation of spirit. If Christ could say to Peter: "Go behind Me, Satan, thou art a stumbling block unto Me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men," and that because Peter shrank from the thought that Christ should die, surely such imperfection may have befallen John, though he was sanctified from his mother's womb.

Go and tell John [so answered Christ] what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the Gospel preached to them. And [no doubt after a moment's significant pause] blessed is he who is not offended in Me!

In his dim prison John has heard rumours only—tell him the full, the glorious reality, and tell him, as I have done to you, tell him in the very words of Isaias the Prophet describing Messianic times, blessed is he if he hears

the prophet's cry to the faint hearted : Be strong and fear not.

When John's messengers had gone Christ turned to the crowd :

You all, in your thousands, went to see John in the desert, what really did you go out to see? A reed shaken by the wind? No, for a mere nothing, or for the sight of a weakling bending before every storm, you did not people the desert with multitudes come from far and near. Well, then, what went ye out to see : A man clad in soft garments? But men of that kind live in a palace. What then did you go out to see? A prophet?

I tell you more than a prophet. For it is he of whom it stands written in the Book of Malachy : " Behold I send My messenger before thy face to prepare the way before Thee ! " Not, therefore, a prophet alone, but the very forerunner of the Messias. Amen, I say unto you, no prophet born of woman has arisen greater than John the Baptist. John is the very link of the Old Testament with the New, he is the greatest of the Old Covenant, none the less the least in the kingdom of heaven, the humblest office-bearer in the New Testament, has a greater office than he.

Our Lord is, of course, not referring to St. John's personal sanctity, as if it were less than that of the humblest Christian ; Our Lord refers to John's office and dignity as Forerunner as being less than that of the humblest member of His kingdom.

From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent bear it away. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John, and if you will receive it, he is Elias that is to come.

This is the time of which in tradition the Jewish Fathers have spoken when Elias separates from Israel those who by force have entered it, and joins to Israel those who by force are excluded from it. This is the

time when eager crowds rush forward to enter the kingdom of heaven, when determined folk, well-nigh with force, make their entrance therein.

From the time that John first began to preach until now that his work is almost over, and in prison he is awaiting his end, the whole period of John's prophesying and baptizing has been one of unwonted grace, the kingdom of heaven is taken by storm, and by might and main are people striving to capture it. Before John the Prophets and the Law referred to it in distant prophecy, but John himself is the Elias that was to come, if you would only rightly understand it. Not Elias in person, but Elias in dignity, power and office. Let him that hath ears to hear, hear it.

Many heard, but few took it to heart and understood. Some time later, when Christ had been transfigured on the Mount, and Peter, James and John had seen Moses and Elias speaking with Him, even those three Apostles asked Our Lord: "Why, then, do the scribes say that Elias must first come?" But Christ answered and said:

> Elias, indeed, is first coming, and he shall restore all things, but none the less I say to you that in another sense Elias did already come, but they did not know him, and they did unto him whatsoever they thought they would. Thus also the Son of Man is about to suffer at their hands.

In the first edition of *The Jewish War,* which Josephus published in Aramaic a number of years before he issued his emended edition in Greek, we find a curious story about the Baptist, which may well contain an historical reminiscence. It is as follows:

"And when he was brought before Archelaus and the Learned in the Law were gathered together, they asked him who he was, and where he had dwelt hitherto. And he answered and said: 'I am guiltless, as the Spirit of God has moved me, and I live on reeds and roots and wild fruit.' Now, as they threw themselves upon him to torture him, that he should desist from his preachings and doings, he spoke: 'It is you, who should abandon your abominable doings and turn back to the Lord your God.'

"On this Simon, a Pharisee, formerly one of the Essenes, arose in great wrath and spoke: 'We read the divine books every day, but thou, who hast come out of the forest as a wild beast, thou darest to teach us and to deceive the people with thy reckless speech.' And he leaped forward to do him bodily mischief. But John rebuked them saying: 'Unto you I will not reveal the mystery that dwelleth amongst you, for you would not. Hence there has come upon you an unspeakable evil and because of you it cometh.' And after he had thus spoken, he went to the country beyond the Jordan and as no one dared to gainsay him, he did the works which he had done before."

It is true the Baptist cannot have been brought before Archelaus, who was deposed when St. John was about twelve years old. The Governor can only have been Valerius Gratus or Pontius Pilatus, who succeeded him when St. John was about thirty. It is not impossible that in the Slavonic translation, which is all we possess of the Aramaic edition of Josephus, the better known name Archelaus replaced the name Valerius. The story makes the impression of being based on fact.

There is another story in the same source, which may possibly have some connection with reality. It is as follows:

"When Philip was in power [as tetrarch of Ituraea and the Trachonitis] he saw in a dream a vulture picking out his eyes. And he gathered his wise men. But as each one interpreted the dream differently, there suddenly came unbidden before him that man to whom we referred before [the Baptist] as going about in skins of beasts and purifying the people at fords of the Jordan. He said: 'Hear the word of the Lord, the vulture is thy covetousness, for the bird is one of prey and robbery. And that sin will take away thy eyes, that is: thy power and thy wife.' And when he had spoken, Philip died before the evening and his power was given to Agrippa, and his wife Herodias his brother Herod took."

Josephus then gives his account of St. John's death. This, though somewhat similar to that of the Gospels, is yet in some particulars different. Considering that Philip the tetrarch died in 34 A.D., at least a couple of years, if not more, after St. John, Josephus is certainly wrong in dating his death on the evening of a prophecy uttered by the Baptist. Josephus may have been misled by the identity of names between Philip, Herod's son by the second Mariamne, and Philip the tetrarch, Herod's son by Cleopatra of Jerusalem. Herod the Great had at least ten wives and his family relations are a little complicated. Herodias was the wife of Philip, Mariamne's son, not the wife of the tetrarch, as Josephus mistakenly thought. As he imagined that Herod Antipas married his brother Philip's wife only after that brother's death, he makes the crime for

which St. John rebuked the tetrarch to be merely a transgression of the levitical law of marrying a deceased brother's wife, though she had borne children to her first husband. Though the Gospels do not in so many words say that Philip was still alive when Herod took his wife, this is plainly understood and even endorsed by Josephus in his later works. St. John would hardly have left his desert to rebuke a mere technical transgression of the Mosaic Law. It was adultery which he rebuked, and for the fearless denunciation of which he died.

"They did unto him whatsoever they thought they would." In these sad words Our Lord described the death of John the Baptist. They—not merely the one criminal, Herod alone—they, the intriguing Scribes and Pharisees, who betrayed him, and not merely they, but all the band of intriguers and enemies at Herod's court and in Jerusalem, they did to them whatsoever they chose. A brief sentence, but pregnant with many torments and sorrows. We only know that suddenly and swiftly, on Herod's birthday, an excutioner entered the cell of the Baptist, a sword flashed and a stroke fell, and the sacred lips were for ever closed of him to whom it was given first to say: "Behold the Lamb of God, Who taketh away the sins of the world." It would have been a dread and doleful ending were it not that we know that in the kingdom of heaven on high, he lives and stands to hear the voice of the Bridegroom, and hearing it his joy is made full.

# CHAPTER IV

## THE SCRIBES

No one probably has ever attentively studied the Gospels without wishing to know more about the Scribes and Pharisees. They, as much as Caiaphas and his priests, encompassed the death of Jesus; they pursued Christ in Galilee; they opposed Him in Judæa; they surrounded Him with cunning and craft, envy and hatred, throughout His ministry; they showed themselves His implacable foes; and they mocked Him in His death agony upon the Cross. The simple folk amongst the Jews, the country folk of Galilee, took kindly to the Prophet of Nazareth and followed Him in thousands; they even wanted to crown Him king. Were it not for the malign influence of the Scribes and Pharisees, Israel might never have rejected its Messias.

Such is the impression necessarily gathered from a perusal of the Gospels; and the fearful denunciation of their hypocrisy, contained in the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew, is an irresistible indictment, coming as it does from the lips of the meekest and humblest of men.

Who were they, and what made them what they were? Is there any record of them outside the Gospels? What is their story, and does it tally with the account given of them in the New Testament? Such are the thoughts which naturally rise in the

mind of an historian, and these questions we wish to answer in this chapter. We shall deal especially with the Scribes and leave till later the somewhat wider subject of the Pharisees.

The first striking point about the Scribes is that they were layfolk. Sometimes no doubt a priest might be a Scribe—there was no law or custom excluding him—but as a matter of fact the profession of a Scribe had nothing to do with the Aaronic priesthood, and was even out of sympathy and often in direct opposition to the existing hierarchy. The Scribes indeed regarded the priesthood as divinely instituted, but considered the holders of that office as shamefully lax and unorthodox.

It had come about in this way.

Some two hundred years before the coming of Christ the Seleucid kings at Antioch, the successors of Alexander the Great, had conceived the idea of hellenizing, and paganizing the Jews. They introduced gymnasia in Jerusalem, where naked youth might engage in Grecian sport; they compelled the eating of pork; they forbade circumcision; they forced sacrifice to heathen deities, and even desecrated the temple at Jerusalem. Unfortunately in this attempt they were aided and abetted by Jewish priests, and the very successor of 'Aaron became a notorious apostate. For a while the high-priesthood presented a most degrading spectacle of rapacity, deceit, and ruffianism. Then arose the glorious Maccabees, who delivered their nation from the yoke of the foreigner, and their national worship and customs from corruption by heathenish rites.

The Maccabees themselves were priests, it is true; but the awful remembrance of the degradation of the

priesthood under the Seleucids remained in the minds of the people. The people realized that their priests needed guardians, and the Divine Law defenders and exponents outside the ranks of the priesthood. Gradually a caste of zealous laymen arose, who made it the work of their lives to study and expound the law.

When the Maccabees themselves became great worldly princes, nay, priest-kings, and in consequence tainted with worldliness, they too were distrusted as the keepers of the national faith, and enthusiastic admiration gave place to contempt and hatred.

Herod murdered the last of the Maccabees, and for forty years made his own creatures highpriests, and the Roman Governors likewise gave Aaron's mitre to whomsoever they would. The priesthood sunk more and more in the esteem of the people. The priests had indeed sacred and sublime functions to perform, the dignity itself of the high-priesthood must ever remain the glory of Israel, but no one thought of going to them to settle a scruple or to ease an anxious conscience.

Ever since the return from the Babylonian exile Judaism had become more and more the religion of a book. The vitality, spontaneity and resilience of national life grew less. Jews were scattered all over the world in its big cities. The bond of union between them was just the possession of the Written Word of God. The Maccabean persecution had roused a fierce fanaticism for the smallest minutiæ of the Law.

On the other hand the Law promulgated by Moses fourteen centuries before needed adjustment and

application to vastly varied circumstances; hence the need for a trained class of lawyers. These lawyers slowly formed themselves into a class, or caste, and gained ever-increasing authority.

In the Mishna Tractate, *Pirke Aboth,* written in the Second Century after Christ, we find a collection of the sayings of the Jewish Fathers. In the opening words of this treatise a chain of tradition is established from Moses to the time after Christ in this way: "Moses received the Law on Sinai and delivered it to Joshuah, he delivered it to the Elders, the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets to the men of the Great Synagogue. Simon the Just was one of the last men of the Great Synagogue. Antigonus of Socho received the tradition from Simon the Just. Jose ben Joeser from Zereda, and Jose ben Jochanan of Jerusalem, received the tradition from them. Josua ben Perachja and Nittai from Arbaela received the tradition from them. Juda ben Tabbai and Simon ben Shetach from them. Shemaja and Abtalion from them. Hillel and Shammai from them."

This claim of tradition is of course a mere artificial one, set up by post-Christian rabbis to establish a direct connection of themselves with Moses of old. The Great Synagogue is but a projection of their imagination, suggested by the book of Esdras; and Simon the Just is clearly Simon I, highpriest at the beginning of the third century before Christ. His name went down to posterity as that of one most strict in maintaining the law.

Antigonus of Socho is the first name of a Scribe, properly so-called, known to us. Socho is probably the small hamlet of that name south-west of

Jerusalem, but beyond his bare name and place of origin we know nothing but one saying attributed to him: "Be not like servants, serving the Lord for the sake of the wages, but be like those who serve without regard to wages, and may the fear of God be ever with you." The first pair of Scribes mentioned probably lived about 150 B.C. The third lived about 90 to 70 B.C. The last pair, the famous Hillel and Shammai, lived immediately before the birth of Christ; in fact Hillel, who lived to a fabulous age, may have been among the Scribes consulted by Herod about the place of the birth of Christ, when all Jerusalem marvelled at the coming of the Magi.

The first pre-Christian Scribe of whom we have some detailed information is Simon ben Shetach, as he took a prominent part in the political troubles during Queen Alexandra's reign (77-69 B.C.). Her husband, during the greater part of his reign (104-78 B.C., had to wage war with the Puritan and Pharisaic party in Judæa, and dying he told his wife to make peace with the Pharisees. This she did, and as she herself became dangerously ill, the government practically passed into the hands of a Council of Pharisees and Scribes. The Scribes from that time onward formally obtained seats in the Senate or Sanhedrin and wielded direct political power. This they used sometimes ruthlessly. Simon ben Shetach hanged eighty women in one day at Ascalon, so the Mishnah tells us. (*Sanh.* vi., 4*b*.).

On the other hand Gamaliel I, or the Elder, is an historic figure of importance. St. Paul sat at his feet and learnt Jewish lore from his lips. This Gamaliel gave the advice to release the accused Apostles, for if their work came from God, it was vain to oppose it;

if it was but human it would perish of itself. Though later Christian legend has made a Christian saint of Gamaliel, he has ever remained one of the most renowned rabbis amongst Jews, which is proof sufficient that he never became Christian. "Since Rabban Gamaliel the Elder is dead, reverence for the Law is no more, and with him died Puritanism and Pharisaism." So we read in the Talmudic treatise *Sota*. He was succeeded as chief of the School of the Scribes by his son Simon. This Simon receives great praise from Josephus, as a man of extraordinary capabilities, who during the first years of the Jewish War led the destinies of the nation.

After the fall of Jerusalem the Scribes who survived that calamity settled down in Jamnia, and also in Lydda, two places not far from the sea coast, southwest of Jerusalem. There they continued their School of Law for about eighty years, and then moved first to Sepphoris and then to Tiberias on the Lake of Galilee. As with the destruction of the Temple practically all the functions of the priesthood ceased, the importance of priests was lessened still further, and the leadership of the nation completely passed into the hands of the Scribes.

This professional class of lay theologians, scholars and lawyers, has maintained itself for twenty centuries in its position of pre-eminence; for the rabbis who to-day preside over the Synagogues, are the successors of the rabbis of two thousand years ago. The Cohen or Jewish priest still gives the blessing in the Synagogue, but beyond this his dignity is but a shadowy one; it is the Rabbi who rules Israel.

Rabban Johanan ben Sakkai is the first Scribe after 70 A.D. known to history, as the first rector of the

school at Jamnia. He is credited in the Talmud with nine decisions modifying and applying law and custom to altered circumstances. Some of these decisions are of little importance, such as the blowing of the trumpets on New Year's Day round the Synagogue at Jamnia instead of on the ruins of the Temple; or the carrying of the Lulab, or festal bouquet of the feast of Tabernacles, on seven days instead of one in remembrance of the Temple. Some were more significant, such as the abolition of the ordeal of the drinking of the Water of Bitterness for those accused of adultery.

Jewish orthodoxy prides itself on the completeness of the chain of tradition through its famous rabbis, and in the Talmud many hundreds of names are mentioned for the first five centuries of our era.

These rabbis claimed an extraordinary reverence and respect from the people. The very title "rabbi" is equivalent to "My lord." "The honour shown to your friend comes next to the respect towards your teacher, and the respect towards your teacher is next to your veneration for God." So we read in the treatise *Aboth;* "The signs of respect towards the Teacher take precedence of those towards one's father, for both son and father owe respect to the Teacher" (*Kerithoth* vi., 9). When a man's father and his teacher have suffered some loss, the loss of the teacher must first be repaired. For his father has only brought him into this world. His teacher, however, who teaches him wisdom, brings him to life in the world to come. But if his father himself be a rabbi, then his father's loss takes precedence. When a man's father and his teacher carry a burden, assistance must be given first to the teacher and then to one's

father. If both father and teacher are in prison, the teacher must first be released; and then the father; but if one's father be a rabbi, he has precedence (*Baba mezia,* ii., 11). The supremacy of the rabbi in the Jewish community could hardly be more emphatically expressed.

Now the task of the rabbis was threefold.

*First,* they had by study to develop the theory of the law. The Mosaic law was held in principle to contain all that was necessary to regulate a man's conduct towards his neighbour and towards God; hence texts had to be found somehow to cover all cases; and it required amazing ingenuity and weirdest application to force the Old Testament to meet modern requirements.

*Secondly,* they had to teach the law to the people. The ceremonial and ritual law had grown to such a mass of almost incredible minutiæ, that the people could not possibly remember it without a learned class continually teaching it.

*Thirdly,* the rabbis had to maintain the obedience to the law amongst the people: this they did by acting as assessors in Jewish courts of law.

It is plain, therefore, that the rabbis were in a true sense of the word legislators, for practically their word was law. A consensus of rabbis on any particular point was final. In order to obtain such a consensus, exchange of views and public discussion were necessary. Hence the rabbis mostly lived in groups together in the bigger towns. Previous to its destruction Jerusalem was obviously the greatest centre, though there were rabbis also in Galilee and Babylon.

The influence of the rabbis was sometimes of a

simple beneficent character, as is shown in a characteristic story quoted from Mezia 28 by Frank Delitzsch: "Once coopers had let the wine run out of a cask belonging to a rabbi. He took their coats in order to reimburse himself, at which they complained to a distinguished teacher. 'Give them back their coats,' was the judgment. 'Is that what you call dealing out justice?' asked the rabbi. 'Yes,' said he, 'walk in the way of the good men, as Solomon commands' (Prov. ii., 20). Whereupon he gave them back their coats. But they complained: 'We are poor people and have worked all day long and are hungry and have nothing.' And the judge said: 'Come, give them their wages.' 'Is that dealing justice?' asked the rabbi. 'Yes,' said he, 'for Solomon continues: 'Keep the paths of righteousness.'"

The attitude of the rabbis towards Christians can be typified by the following story, found in the Tosephta tractate *Hullin,* about Rabbi Eleazar, about 120 A.D. We read: None should trade with them (the Christians); none should buy from them; none should take from them; none should give unto them; none should teach their children a trade; none should use them as doctors, neither for his cattle nor for himself. It happened that Rabbi Eleazar ben Damah was bitten by a serpent, and that James, a man from Capharsamah, came to heal him in the name of Jesus ben Pantera [a Jewish designation for Our Lord]; but Rabbi Ismael would not let him, saying that it was unlawful. Then Ben Damah said to him: "I shall order someone to come who shall heal me." But there was no time to fetch a doctor before he died. Rabbi Ismael said: "Blessed art

thou, Ben Damah, who hast departed in peace and hast not made a breach in the hedge, set by the Wise; for whosoever breaketh through the hedge of the Wise, in the end punishment shall befall him; this is the meaning of the text: whoso breaketh a hedge, a serpent shall bite him" (Eccles. x., 8).

This is a typical instance of Talmud stories, and a typical case of Scribal fanaticism. It begins with a decision of the Wise: "None shall, etc.": the law of outlawry against Christians—no buying, nor selling, no giving, no taking, and exclusion of their children from Jewish schools, and the last item is most interesting: no permission to use Christians as doctors or healers. Blessed is the man who dies rather than be healed by a Christian, for such is the law of the Fathers.

In the Palestinian recension of the Eighteen Prayers, an ancient litany of nineteen centuries ago, we read: "May the apostates have no hope, may the kingdom of pride be rooted out swiftly in our days, may the Nazarenes and the heretics (Minim) perish in a moment, may they be blotted out from the book of life, may they not be counted amongst the just! Blessed art Thou, Jahveh, who humblest the proud!"

This curse on the Christians was taken as a sort of inspired utterance of Samuel the Less, who composed it about the year 80 A.D. at the request of Rabbi Gamaliel II. It has remained in the litany ever since and is there to-day, though no doubt for prudential reasons the word "Nazarenes" was later omitted. But the word Minim, "heretics," included the Christians, in fact Minim became practically a designation for them.

There is a story of Rabbi Eleazar ben Hyrkanus,

a contemporary of the above-mentioned Gamaliel II, to the effect that he was accused before the Roman authorities of professing the faith of the Minim. Eleazar had started a school of his own at Lydda. He was so conservative and scrupulous of tradition that he was compared to a plastered cistern that does not lose a drop of water. He was excluded from rabbinic debates because of his methods of obstruction. Imagine then his horror of being accused of being a Christian! The distressed rabbi examined his conscience and found that he had once taken pleasure in an explanation of a Scripture text given by one of the disciples of Jesus the Nazarene, called James of Caphar Sekaniah. This James had uttered a word of heresy in the name of Jesus ben Pantera! Even a moment's inward complaisance in the word of a Christian was a sin not easily forgotten.

"If a gentile or a shepherd and raiser of small cattle (a class of people who were a public nuisance—gypsies) fall into a pit, he should be left there, but one should not throw him in; but the Minim, the apostates and traitors should be left, nay rather they should be thrown in." Such is one of the rabbinical decisions given in the tractate Baba Mezia. The rabbis clearly were the soul of the opposition to Christianity.

A curious sidelight is thrown on Jewish mentality in the days of Christ, and on the doings of the Scribes, by the stories in the Mishnah about Jewish miracle men. These tales may not be historically reliable in detail but there can be no doubt that, taken together, they give a vivid and correct picture of the times immediately before and after the beginning of our era.

Rain-makers seem to have been much in vogue. One of them was Honi, the Circle-drawer, who lived in the generation before Herod the Great. People came to him saying: "Pray for rain." Sure of his powers Honi significantly answered: "Take the Passahcakes in, lest they get sodden with water!" The crowd believing him, took them into the Temple. Honi prayed; but no rain came. Then Honi drew a circle, and standing within it, said to God: "Thy children have turned to me, for I am like a son of the household before Thee. I swear by Thy great name, that I shall not move from here till Thou hast mercy on Thy children." A few drops of rain began to fall. Honi said: "I have not asked for so little, but for enough to fill cisterns and tanks." The rain came down more violently. Honi said: "I have not asked for so little, but for rain in superabundance. Torrents of rain drenched the ground, till the people fled from the lower parts to the temple-mount to escape the flood. Then they begged Honi to pray for the rain to stop. The proud and confident Honi said: "Go and see what's left of the lost property office after the flood." This office was a common rendezvous in Jerusalem. Then Simon ben Shetach, the Scribe, sent to him, saying: "If thou werest not Honi, I would put thee under excommunication; but what can I do? When thou sinnest, God none the less listens to thy request, as if thou wert as one sinning against his father, who for all that does what he wants."

There is another weird tale of a Scribe going to the Governor—possibly Nicodemus going to Pilate, but the story is told of Buni (= Honi?) and Rabbi Nathan —and wagering with him 12 talents of silver that he would make rain on a fixed day by his prayers. This

of course he does, but the Governor claims that the sun had already set when the rain began to fall. Upon this Nakedimon, or whoever he was, prays again, and suddenly the clouds dispersing show that the sun is still in the sky.

The rabbis were not merely rain-makers, but also faith-healers. Rabbi Hanina ben Doza seems to have been the most famous in this way. He lived in the days of the Apostles. When a son of Rabban Gamaliel was ill, he sent two of his students to Hanina to ask for prayers. Hanina goes to his upper room and prays. He comes down, and says: "Go, the fever has left him!" When they ask him how he knows, he answers: "It has been conveyed to me that when my prayer comes easy (literally, runs in my mouth), it is accepted; when it does not, it is rejected."

Hanina once went to Ben Zakkai to study the law. On his arrival Ben Zakkai asked him to pray for his son who was ill. Hanina put his head between his knees and prayed hard. The boy lived. Ben Zakkai said: "If I had kept my head between my knees for a whole day, God would not have cared!" Ben Zakkai's wife thereupon said to him: "Is then Hanina greater than you?" "No," said her husband, "he is like a servant before his King." Humility was decidedly not amongst the virtues of the rabbis!

The study of the law endowed them with such sacredness and sanctity that they loved to be regarded as beings on a higher plane. The Gospels picture them well as demanding the first place at table and loving salutations in the market place. When we read the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, we must remember that practically all Scribes were Pharisees,

though all Pharisees were not Scribes. The Scribes, as the Mishnah continually shows, laid claim to a superiority, which at first might seem incredible. "The words of the Scribes are more to be loved," so we read in Jer. Berachoth, f. 3. 2, "than the words of the law, for amongst the words of the law, some are of greater, some of lesser weight, but the words of the Scribes are all important."

Without the sacred character of the priesthood, without any divine mission as teachers of their fellows, the status of the Scribes was one completely self-assumed and based on their claim to scholarship in Jewish theology or rather casuistry; on their claim to greater conscientiousness and scrupulosity in the observance of the law; and on their tacit claim of greater piety and closer intercourse with God.

Their whole position in reality rested on the scrupulosity and superstition of the populace, and on the genuine desire of the people to find some leaders in the religious life at a time when the priests of Aaron were too worldly to be spiritual guides. The position of the Scribes was largely due to the need of the people to venerate and admire some, at least reputed, models of learning and piety at a time when political and civic endeavour had become an impossibility.

No wonder that when Jesus of Nazareth arose and drew the multitudes after him, this small caste and narrow profession of self-righteous lay preachers, bible-experts and lawyers should, in bitter envy, have combated an influence so utterly unlike their own, an influence which was to destroy their long-wielded power.

# CHAPTER V

## HILLEL AND SHAMMAI

It is not impossible that amongst the Scribes, whom Herod consulted at the arrival of the Magi in order to ascertain the birthplace of the newborn King of the Jews, was the famous Hillel. He was, indeed, on good terms with the court and would have been the most obvious person to be summoned, amongst others, to the palace to give his opinion on the birthplace of the coming Messias, but, though he reached extreme old age, it seems more likely that he was already dead, when the Wise Men from the East reached Jerusalem. His probably somewhat younger contemporary, Shammai, may have been there, even if Hillel, the Elder, had already exchanged the earthly Jerusalem for the house of his eternity.

These two, Hillel and Shammai, had been the foremost figures in the world of the Scribes for many years, and throughout New Testament times their names were household words on the lips of those who knew Jesus and His Apostles. Their disputes and the disputes of their disciples must have been the talk of the religious world in which Jesus and the Twelve moved. Hillel and Shammai had been rivals. On every point on which divergence among orthodox Jews was possible, these two had differed. In fact, it is clear that the mere fact of the one taking one side in a discussion was sufficient to make the other take

the opposite side. Their contradictions to one another are scattered throughout the Mishna, the oldest part of the Talmud.

Tradition has it that the two men were complete contrasts in character. Shammai was a man of anger and a man of rigorist principles, Hillel was a man of imperturbable good humour and often of what were then regarded as easy-going principles. The meekness of Hillel and the irascibility of Shammai became proverbial. Of Shammai's private life we know almost nothing except a few anecdotes. During the feast of Tabernacles the Jews were bound to live in booths made of the branches and the foliage of trees. Now when, so it is said, Shammai's daughter-in-law gave birth to a son not long before this feast, Shammai had the roof broken through over where mother and child were lying, and had the place covered over with fresh green in order that the newborn child might keep the feast in obedience to the Law. On the day of Atonement, when Jews are allowed neither food nor drink of any sort, Shammai had forced a strict fast even on the infant, but the relatives, fearing the danger of twenty-four hours' abstention from food for the helpless child, had finally overcome the scruples of the stern grandfather.

A certain pagan once came to Shammai promising him that he would become a Jew, if he could teach him the Jewish Law in the time he could manage to balance on one foot. As only answer the angry rabbi raised his threatening stick and the Gentile hurried away. When Hillel was asked the same question, he gave a meek answer, which has become famous. In the *Sayings of the Fathers* the following noble exhortation is attributed to Shammai: "Make the study

of the Law thy chief occupation; speak little, accomplish much, and receive every one with a cheerful countenance."

Once a pagan came to Shammai and said: "How many laws have you?" He said: "Two, the written and the spoken one." "I'll believe the written one," said the pagan, "not the spoken one. Make me a convert, but teach me only the written law." Shammai flew into a passion and drove him from his house with insults. Then the pagan went to Hillel, who received him as a proselyte. On the first day he taught him the letters of the Jewish alphabet, but the next day he taught him the letters all wrong on purpose. The pagan said: "But yesterday you told me differently!" Hillel said: "Why should my word of yesterday be law to you, if you will not believe in a spoken law?"

Once a pagan came and said he would like to be a Jew if only they would make him high priest straightway! He received abuse from Shammai, but Hillel reasoned sweetly with him, showing that it was an unreasonable condition.

These three pagans afterwards met—so goes the story—and said: "The anger of Shammai nearly drove us off the earth, the meekness of Hillel brought us under the wings of God's presence."

Hillel became a kind of saint of Judaism, and modern Jews are accustomed to compare him with Our Lord. There is a tradition, but a very doubtful one indeed, that he was of the family of David. He was a Babylonian by birth, and as a youth, together with his brother Sebnah, he came to Jerusalem about fifty years before Christ. His brother engaged in commerce, but Hillel came to seek for wisdom from

the lips of the ancients. He was already married, but he was very poor, hence he became a labourer for a *tropaicon* a day. Half of his wages (about three pence) he gave as entrance fee to the man who kept the rabbinic school. His teachers were Shemaia and Abtalion. These two seem to have belonged to the moderate school as distinct from their more ferociously fanatic contemporaries. On a mid-winter morning Shemaia and Abtalion once found the window of their schoolroom darkened. They found a man crouched together in the opening and totally snowed in. They recognized their student Hillel, stiff and stark with cold, and unconscious. Even though it was Sabbath day, they took him in, rubbed him with oil, and managed to bring him back to life. The young man had not had wherewith to pay his fee, and as he did not wish to miss the lecture, he had climbed into the window where he could hear and see, but had gradually been overcome by the intense cold and was thus nearly frozen to death.

Hillel's teachers are well known in history. When, in 47 B.C., the youthful Herod stood before the Sanhedrin to answer for his doings in Galilee and his accusers did not speak for fear, Shemaia foretold that Herod would one day put them all to death. This Herod did ten years later when he put all his former accusers to the sword. As Shemaia and Abtalion had counselled the surrender of Jerusalem to Herod, they were not only spared but even highly honoured by him. It is likely that thus the party of Herodians was started, a party of moderates, who had decided to make the most of their Herodian rulers. Herod so much valued the support of Abtalion that, when some years later the oath he demanded to the Roman

authorities was refused by Abtalion and his disciples, Herod let the matter drop out of regard for the venerated rabbi. Thus Hillel as disciple of Abtalion escaped a great danger.

Hillel seems to have inherited the mild and prudent outlook from his masters. None the less, for some reason unknown to us, but probably because the pro-Herodian party found it impossible to maintain itself in the schools, Hillel became a fugitive from Palestine and for a time returned to Babylon. When he came back to Jerusalem, he found the Bene berytha in charge of the rabbinic school. The question happened to be agitated whether, if Passover fell on a Sabbath, it was lawful to break the Sabbath rest by slaying the Paschal Lamb. Hillel ably argued that it was, for, if the morning and evening sacrifice can be slain on a Sabbath, *a fortiori* the Paschal Lamb, said he. When he could also prove that his teachers Shemaia and Abtalion had decided in the same sense, he won his case and his solution was permanently adopted.

Hillel became the leading teacher and rector of the rabbinic school. Later legend, in contradiction to history, makes him president of the Sanhedrin, and Shammai vice-president. Shammai, so far from being Hillel's subordinate, was his lifelong rival. The students of these two masters seem often to have fought out their differences with their fists rather than their tongues, and to have not infrequently resorted to open violence. Later Jewry kept a fastday to mourn over the dissensions of of the two schools. Hillel himself was always in favour of peace. Once he was bringing an animal for sacrifice in the Temple. As he foresaw and dreaded an argument with the disciples of Shammai about the

sex of the animal to be offered up on that occasion, his love for peace exceeded his love for truth, and he deceived them about the sex of the victim, saying it was a cow instead of an ox. He succeeded thus in escaping molestation.

When, as we told above, Shammai had threatened to strike the pagan who wanted to be instructed in the Law while he balanced on one foot, Hillel said to this pagan: "What you yourself dislike, do not do that to another. That is the whole Law, everything else is only explanation. Go and learn that." This is really a noble saying, but it does not suffice to raise Hillel to the level of Jesus of Nazareth, as, strange to say, is often done by Jewish writers, and it is absurd to make Jesus a follower of Hillel. The saying, "What you yourself dislike, do not do that to another," is, as a matter of fact, much older than Hillel, as it occurs in the book of Tobias (iv. 16). It is used in almost the same terms by Philo,[1] and it occurs in the Didache and the Epistle of Barnabas. One would not wonder if it was one of the wise old saws which occured in the *Wisdom of Ahikar* and which, through Democritus, was known to the Greek world since the sixth century before Christ. The saying would thus have greater piquancy as addressed to a Gentile.

We have no wish to deprive Hillel of an exalted sentiment of kindness towards his fellows, for another saying also is on record as uttered by him:[2] "Love men and bring them to the Law," which is a true echo of Leviticus xix., 18: "Love thy neighbour as thyself."

It is precisely the combination of the two command-

[1] In Eusebius, *Præparatio Evangelica*, Viii. 7.
[2] *Pirke Aboth*, i. 12.

ments, that of the love of God and that of the love of our neighbour, which is not found before the Gospel. Even in the Shema, which is the prayer that every Jew recited twice daily in the time of Our Lord, the first commandment of the love of God is quoted from Deuteronomy vi., 5, but the love of one's neighbour is not added to it. Moreover, the saying of Hillel is in a negative form, not to do to your neighbour what is hateful to yourself. This is a feeble and much weakened form of the positive command to love him, especially as this command is raised to a level with and based on the command to love God. Hillel's saying, therefore, as it omits the principal part, namely, the love of God, as it gives only the negative form of the precept towards one's neighbour, as it deals with actions and not directly with the inward love towards him, is on a lower level than that of Our Lord. Strictly speaking, it is profoundly untrue, as love of God and not love of one's neighbour is the essence of the Law. Modern Jews will argue that for Hillel the love of God as basis of the Law was an understood thing and needed no emphasis. But the fact remains that, since in his famous answer to this pagan, Hillel did not include it, the pagan at least would not consider it an understood thing, whatever Hillel may have thought, and thus the reply, however well meant, was misleading.

There lies a whole world between Hillel's saying and Christ's. So likewise there is a wide distance between Hillel's kindness and Christ's. They say that Hillel, knowing a Jew who had been very well off, but who had lost all his money, pitied him in his poverty and hired a horse for his use, and once even, when the impoverished man had no one to act as

groom, Hillel himself ran before the horse. A kind act, indeed, but hardly to be compared with the supreme deed of Him Who gave His life as a ransom for many.

A story is told of Hillel that on a Friday evening, just as he was combing and washing himself for the Sabbath, a man came to the door of his house and with a thundering noise demanded admittance. Hillel swiftly threw a cloak over his shoulders and, coming, meekly asked the stranger what he wanted. "I have a question to ask," said he. "Well, ask your question, my son," said Hillel. "Why have Babylonians such stupid round heads?" "An important question, indeed," said the meek rabbi from Babylon; "it must be because over in Babylonia there are no clever midwives." After an hour, again a dreadful noise at the door and a raucous voice from the same stranger: "Is Hillel in?" Hillel appears again, and is asked a second question: "Why have the Thermudians such small slit eyes?" "An important question, indeed," said the meek rabbi; "it must be because they dwell in the wide sandy deserts." A third time the same scene is repeated and the question asked: "Why do Africans have such flat feet?" And the answer was: "Because they live in marshy districts." The stranger then continued: "I should like to ask you more questions, but perhaps you might get angry." "Not at all, not at all," said Hillel; and he sat down by his side, saying: "Ask away, my son, whatever you like." "So you are Hillel, are you?" said the truculent visitor, "well, I hope there are few like you for I laid a wager for 400 *sus* [a coin with Zeus stamped upon it] that I could make you angry and I lost."

Not a bad story—*se non e vero, e ben trovato*—but, whether true or not, it is hardly fit to be mentioned in a comparison between Hillel and Him Who, when nailed, hands and feet, to the Cross, prayed to His Father Almighty: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

A good-humoured man Hillel certainly was, a man who showed his homeliness in his well-known advice that those who were asked to a wedding party, should lustily sing: "Hail thou bright and beauteous bride," however ugly the damsel might be. It is natural that at Hillel's grave the people lamented: "Alas, alas, for the loss of this meek and pious man, a real disciple of Esdras." His life's work is well summed up in his own axiom: "Be a disciple of Aaron, loving peace, making peace; love men and draw them to the Law."

A comparison, however, between Jesus and Hillel is impossible. Hillel was no reformer, Christ made all things new. Hillel was at most "a true disciple of Esdras" the Scribe, who bade his disciples be followers of Aaron. Jesus was the disciple of no one and bade people to take up their cross and follow Him. Christ broke with the Sabbath laws and the food laws and the purity laws of the Mosaic system, and the nationalism of the Jew. Christ founded a religion for every man who enters into this world. Hillel spent his life in anxious efforts to make people keep not only the Mosaic Law, but the innumerable and galling precepts of rabbinic traditions. According to Hillel, no entrance to God's kingdom except through the narrow gate of Judaism.

The points of discussion between the schools of Hillel and Shammai are still to be found in scores in

the Mishna, and the discussions between the disciples reflect the spirit of the masters. One can gain no better insight into the spirit of the schools of Christ's day than by reading some treatises of earliest rabbinic lore. We shall therefore give a page of the treatise commonly called: "An Egg," or *Bezah,* and sometimes "Holiday," or *Yom Tob.*

As introduction, it must be remarked that, according to rabbinic law, on the Sabbath "all manner of work" is forbidden; on a holiday, however, only "servile work," as in this they claimed to follow the exact text of Holy Writ. On the Sabbath it was, therefore, strictly forbidden to cook or prepare any food, light any fire, carry anything except one's clothes, and so on; but on a holiday, say Passover, or Pentecost or Tabernacles, it was permitted to prepare and cook food and also to carry it, for this was not *servile* work. However, this permission to prepare food was strictly limited to the food required on the holiday itself. Difficulties arose when a holiday was immediately followed by a Sabbath; then the preparation of the food for the Sabbath was, indeed, allowed, but only in conjunction with the preparation of the food for the holiday, not as a separate action; food for two days might be prepared, but not two different meals the preparation for which was distinct one from another. Moreover, there was the minute and difficult distinction between *mukzeh* and *mukan.* For the Sabbath only such food might be prepared as was "previously already specified for use," that is, *mukan,* not such food as was set aside so as not to be used on the Sabbath, that is, *mukzeh.* It was therefore absolutely imperative to fix in detail the exact things to be eaten on the Sabbath, for nothing not so

fixed could even be touched on that day. Now a thing not in one's possession previous to the holiday could not possibly be so specified, *a fortiori* a thing which did not exist—a *nolad,* or a thing yet to be born.

Now, great difficulties arose about an egg laid on a holiday. Some maintained that, as it existed obviously already within the hen, it could be *mukan,* or fixed as food for the Sabbath; others maintained that, until it was laid, the egg was not in a perfect state, in support of which opinion they could allege that an egg in its unlaid state, however apparently perfect, could not be hatched. Hillel and Shammai, agreed that, if the hen was bought, or brought within the house, for the purpose of being killed and eaten, and it then unexpectedly laid an egg before it was killed, the egg could not be eaten, because the egg had then not been previously fixed as an object of food. The real crux of the question was the case of a hen that was not herself destined for food during the holiday, but that laid an egg in the ordinary way. Some held the egg was illegitimate in its origin and therefore forbidden during the Sabbath—one was even strictly forbidden to touch it, for food not allowed to be eaten was not allowed to be touched; others took a milder view. And thus the Mishna Treatise *Bezah* opens:

"An egg laid on a holiday, so says the school of Shammai, may be eaten, but the school of Hillel says not. The school of Shammai says: To have leaven in the house in quantity as much as an olive, and anything leavened in quantity as much as a date is allowed. But the school of Hillel says: Both may be in quantity as much as an olive." To *eat* anything leavened was criminal, even as little as the

quantity of an olive, as both schools agreed. "The school of Shammai says: If anyone slaughters a beast or a fowl on a holiday, let him dig with a spade and cover the blood. The school of Hillel says: It is forbidden to slaughter unless one has the earth for the covering of the blood already prepared on the previous day—this, however, one always has, for ashes will suffice to cover it." The Jews were not allowed to eat the blood of a slaughtered animal, but had to drain it totally dry. Now the blood thus drained out had to be covered according to law. Hillel held that ashes from the grate would do; Shammai held it had to be done with earth from the soil. Now, as digging was strictly forbidden on a holiday as servile work, the problem was how to obtain soil to cover the blood, if one killed an animal for food on a holiday.

"The school of Shammai says: It is not allowed to move a ladder from one dovecot to another, but it is allowed to do so from one opening to another on a holiday in order to catch the birds for food. The school of Hillel allows both. The school of Shammai holds that on a holiday it is not allowed to take out something for food, which one has not actually grasped the previous day [the day began and ended at the very moment of sunset]; the school of Hillel held that it suffices to state by word of mouth what one had decided to take out, without actually grasping it with the hand. If one has fixed black ones and finds white ones, or *vice versa;* if one has fixed on two and finds three they are disallowed, but if one has fixed on three and finds only two, they are allowed. If a man has decided on those in the nest and he finds them before the nest, they are disallowed, except if they were the only ones available. The school of

Shammai says it is forbidden to take the wooden lids off the cases in grocers' shops on a holiday; the school of Hillel allows both to take them off and put them on again." Hillel considered these cases furniture and therefore the removal or replacing of these coverings was according to him not "a building operation" in the sense of the law.

"The school of Shammai says it is forbidden to use the millstone even to mince the meat on, because it was meant for the grinding of corn, a thing strictly forbidden, but the school of Hillel allows it. The school of Shammai says: it is not allowed to carry a child, a festal bouquet, or even a roll of the Law out of the house into the public street, but the school of Hillel allows it. The school of Shammai says it is not allowed to carry the firstlings of bread or the portions of the victim to the priest, whether they are set aside for this purpose on the day itself or on the previous day. The school of Hillel allows it." Shammai argues thus: "The firstlings of the bread and the portions are gifts to the priest, but so are the first fruits likewise, but it is admitted that first fruits must not be carried on a holiday, so neither therefore must the others." But Hillel answered: "By no means, you cannot apply the case of the first fruits which cannot be separated from tree or plant on a holiday, to the portions of bread or meat which can be separated on a holiday,"

"The school of Shammai says: Spices should be ground with a wooden piston, but salt merely with the stick in the earthenware pot. Hillel says directly the opposite. Whosoever gathers beans and chestnuts on a holiday, must gather only what he intends to eat and eat it at once; so says Shammai. But

Hillel says: A man may gather as usual in his lap, or basket, or on a plate, but not on a table or in a sieve; it would look as if he laid in a store Rabban Gamaliel says: It is even allowed to wash them and to skim off the refuse. The school of Shammai says on a holiday it is only allowed to send portions of food to one another (likely to be consumed the same day), but according to the school of Hillel it is allowed to send cattle, venison, or fowl, whether alive or slaughtered. It is permitted to send wine, oil, flour, beans, but not corn. Rabbi Simon even allows corn. It is allowed to send clothes, whether sewn or unsewn, whether woollen or linen, in so far as they are needed for use during the holiday, but not sandals with nails in them or unsewn shoes. Rabbi Juda says: Not a white shoe, because it needs further labour to black it. The rule is: What can be used on a holiday may be sent."

This is the first chapter of the "Egg" treatise of the Mishna, and it is typical of practically the whole of that book and of the discussions in the rabbinical schools at the time of Christ. It is a picture of the mentality of the Scribes Christ had to deal with.

Hillel's name in Jewish history is mainly connected with the practice of Prosbol, the introduction of which was the only real innovation due to that celebrated Scribe. Now what was Prosbol? It was a legal device to evade the observance of the sabbatical year, commanded in Deuteronomy, xv., 1-11. "At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release: every creditor shall release that which he hath lent unto his neighbour. Of a foreigner thou mayest exact it, but whatsoever of thine is with thy brother, thine hand shall release." In consequence, no Jew

could ask payment of a debt from a fellow Jew in a Sabbath year. Every seventh year deleted and cancelled all debts. This was hard on the rich, in whom the banking instinct was even then very strong; it was hard on the poor, for naturally no one would lend them anything as the sabbatical year drew near. The beautiful appeal for mercy and charity in the Book of Deuteronomy fell, alas, usually on deaf ears. Now the Prosbol transferred the collection of the private debt from the private creditor to the public authorities, who by legal fiction became the agents for the private creditor. A special clause was inserted in the deed by mutual agreement between borrower and lender that the debt was repayable even during the sabbatical year, and then the deed was registered in the court of Public Trustees, and thus Deuteronomy was evaded.

There is another practical provision of a similar kind which is attributed to Hillel. It dealt with the fradulent absconding of a lease-holder on the last day of the year previous to the jubilee to avoid the provision of Leviticus, xxv., 25 ff. Leaseholders or temporary purchasers, in order to prevent the original owner, from redeeming his property, completely vanished till the time for redemption had expired! Hillel ordered that in such a case the redemption money could be paid in court.

If we compare all this with Christ's answer to the man who came to Him and said: "Master, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me!" we shall realize the difference between Hillel and Jesus. The Jew who came to Jesus for settling his claim to an inheritance did a natural thing. He understood that Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be a rabbi. Rabbis

existed mainly to settle disputes about the Law; their decisions practically had legal force. The man went to ask expert opinion from a well-known lawyer, so he thought. The answer he expected was probably some application of the text in Deuteronomy xxi., 17, ordering an eldest son to give a share of the inheritance to a younger one. The answer he received was the curt and final: "Man, who appointed Me judge or divider over you?" Christ thereby swept the whole of contemporary rabbinism aside; it is as if He said: "Man, you mistake Me for a lawyer; I am a prophet," and then with His back to the man and His face to the crowd He spoke the parable of the man who had laid up many treasures and who had filled his barns for many years, but to whom God said: "Thou fool, this very night, do they require thy soul of thee, and the things thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?"

Another point slurred over by many, who hardly see the difference between Jesus and Hillel, is the question of divorce. Moses had accepted divorce as an unavoidable evil and had only legislated to lessen it. Moses punished adultery with death, but this severe penalty had fallen into desuetude in Our Lord's day, and Christ had tacitly sanctioned this leniency by saying concerning the woman taken in adultery: "Let him who is without sin, cast the first stone." In Deuteronomy xxiv., 1-4, Moses had presupposed as ground for divorce "some shameful matter." Shammai thought this meant adultery, of course when the death penalty was not applied. Hillel said it meant anything whatever, which rendered the wife displeasing to the husband, it might be a dish badly prepared, the meat for dinner badly

burnt, a mere blunder on the wife's part, if a wife went out without the veil before her face, or addressed a stranger, or let household secrets out. In fact, the husband might divorce her for any reason whatsoever; even for no other reason than that he had met a woman prettier than she, said the illustrious Rabbi Akiba two generations later.

If we remember that in Hillel's day the right of divorce existed only for the husband, a wife could not sunder the bond for any reason whatsoever; the helpless degradation of woman was a blot on first-century Judaism. When, towards the end of that century, divorce was allowed under certain circumstances even to the woman, when Hillel's grandson Gamaliel decided that the divorce of the one woman must at least be legally complete before the wedding with the other one took place, when arrangements were made for the father to maintain the children and to give the woman some indemnity for frivolous divorce, at least some relief was given to the weaker sex. If modern Jews in Western lands are now monogamists and form good households, it is not Hillel they have to thank, but Jesus of Nazareth, Whose influence has been felt even by them, however much they may be unconscious of it.

Sometimes Hillel and Shammai, leaving Jewish casuistry aside, discussed questions of doctrine and exegesis. They were interested in the fate of the faithful departed. The school of Shammai thought that the dead were divided into three classes. They quoted Daniel xii., 2: "Many of them that sleep in the dust shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt," but they added to these two classes a third, namely, those

whose merits and whose sins were equally balanced. Such people had to pass to and fro through a purgatorial fire; only when thoroughly purified, could they be raised out of this. Shammai's school aptly quoted the beautiful words of Zachary xiii., 9, in support of their view. "I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver and will try them as gold, they shall call on My name and I will hear them: I will say it is My people; and they shall say: The Lord is my God." Hillel would have none of this, he quoted Exodus xxxiv., 6, "The Lord is a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy." He held that in case of equally balanced merits, God would throw His mercy in the scale of man's merits, and that David, in Ps. cxvi., sang of these happy dead. Hillel in this point did not represent the common feeling of the Jewish people, who, in common with Judas the Maccabee held that "it was a good and a wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins." Though Shammai's opinions approached the Christian doctrine of purgatory, they were not without error. As a typical Jew he regarded man's merits as something which could buy man's reward; a Jew's salvation was purchased by his good works, it was a matter of weighing up merits against sins. One greater than Shammai, Saul of Tarsus, a disciple of Gamaliel I, wrote against this, teaching that "we are saved by faith through grace and not of ourselves."

The doctrine of the resurrection was ever in the thought of the Pharisees and fiercely held against the Sadducees. Their very preoccupation with this doctrine sometimes led to weird speculations. Such

was Shammai's idea that at the resurrection the process of the re-formation of the body would follow an inverse process to that of the formation of the child in the womb, as according to Ezechiel xxxvii., the dry bones are already there to be reclothed with flesh. Hillel held the opposite, namely, that the restoration of the human body would be perfectly parallel in its development to the formation of the child in the womb. When we recall such quaint speculations, we understand better the question of the Sadducees, put to Our Lord, about the wife with the seven husbands: whose she would be in the resurrection, and we echo Our Lord's answer, "Ye err, not knowing the Scriptures; in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage."

Hillel is sometimes quoted as a Jewish mystic, but in applying this word to him we have to give it the widest possible meaning. The Jews were given to attach cryptic or cabalistic meanings to words in Holy Scripture and thus give them a "mystic" sense. There is a controversy on record between the schools of Hillel and Shammai about the mystic sense of the Hebrew word for lamb, the victim for the daily sacrifice. The word is *kebezh*. Shammai derived it from a root meaning "to press or hold down," because the daily sacrifice held down and rendered harmless Israel's sins. Hillel remarked that things only held down are apt to come to the surface again, and in consequence he derived the etymology from a slightly different root, *kabas,* meaning "to cleanse or wash away," because it purified Israel from its iniquities. Needless to say, that both etymologies are impossible from a philological standpoint.

Famous in Jewry are Hillel's seven principles of

Scripture interpretation, or rules for rabbinic logic based on the use of Bible texts. They were the arguments: 1. *a fortiori;* 2. from similarity; 3. from sufficiency of one text; 4. from combination of two texts; 5. from general to particular, and *vice versa;* 6. from greater precision; 7. from the context. Rabbi Ismael, a generation later, modified these and increased them to thirteen, and these have become the standard for Jewish exegesis ever since. The ingenuity with which, by the aid of these rules, the rabbis built up a whole system of fantastic conclusions, is truly amazing.

Hillel's mysticism, however, was not limited to finding mystic meanings in the sounds of Hebrew words. In the treatise *Succoth,* which contains the regulations for the observance of the feast of Tabernacles, he is reported to have been mystically entranced during the festivity of the water-drawing during the octave of Tabernacles, and to have exclaimed: "If I am here, so says God, every one is here; if I am not here, no one is here." A saying which sounds somewhat pantheistic or suggests some sort of "cosmic consciousness." A simpler and more beautiful saying of his, is that referring to Exodus xx., 24: "In every place, where I record My name, I will come unto thee and I will bless thee." Hillel makes God invite every soul to intimacy with Him in the words: "To the place in which I delight, My feet bring Me. If thou comest to My house, I come to thine; if thou comest not to Mine, I come not to thine."

It was, no doubt, due to Hillel's power to see mystic meanings in Scripture texts that he maintained the inspiration of Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, and

Ezechiel against the more prosaic Shammai, who rejected these books.

If, then, Hillel is but a scribe and not a prophet, a Jewish sage and not a Christian saint, and the Scribe of Babylon and the Man from Nazareth are simply incommensurables, it would none the less be unjust not to acknowledge the wisdom and the persuasiveness of many of Hillel's sayings. They remind one of sentences in the books of Proverbs, and of the Wisdom of Ben Sira and sometimes of the Wisdom of Solomon, though the latter book, which is almost contemporary with Hillel, is in a loftier strain and more touched by Greek thought.

"A name made great," said Hillel, "is a name destroyed."

"A man who increases not, decreases."

"He who will not learn, deserves to be slain."

"He, who crowns himself with the tiara, perishes."

"If I am not for myself, who is for me, and if I only am for myself, what am I? If not now, when then?"

This last saying is very much appreciated in Jewish circles as the most correct statement of due self-love and due regard to one's neighbour. Notwithstanding the cryptic terseness of the last sentence, which almost passes understanding, the saying is certainly a notable one, but the Christian reader misses the reference to God or the supernatural, and cannot but think of St. Paul's cry: "If God is for us, who is against us?"

There is a practical echo of Solomon's "Vanity of vanities and all is vanity," in Hillel's words: "More flesh, more worms; more maidservants, more lewdness; more men-servants, more theft; but he, who

hath gotten unto himself the words of the Law, hath gotten unto himself life in the world to come." More sublime are the words of Thomas à Kempis: "*Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas præter Deum amare et illi soli servire.*"

"In a place, where there are no men, endeavour thou to be a man," said Hillel, and he spoke well, though he lacked the supreme model of manhood, the man, Christ Jesus. Hillel's ideal man was, perhaps, too much of a gentleman in the common connotation of that word, for "no boor is likely to fear sin," said Hillel, "nor is an unrefined person likely to be pious, as the shamefaced is not likely to learn or an angry man to be a good teacher."

Hillel and Shammai never had the dread choice put before them to accept Jesus as Messias, or to reject Him. Possibly they might have despised as a boor and an unrefined person the Prophet of Nazareth, had they lived to see His days. There is, however, so much earnestness, and sincerity in many of their words, that it is hard to think that they would have been included in the condemnation: "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"

We may hope that with Abraham in the Limbo of the Ancient Fathers they saw Jesus and were glad.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PHARISEES

THE most graphic and the most sarcastic description ever given of the Pharisees was written, not by a Christian but by a Jew. It was written not in the twentieth century, but probably close on the first. It was written not at a distance or from hearsay, for it stands in the Jerusalem *Talmud* as well as in that of Babylon.

Seven kinds of Pharisees are designated by popular nicknames. First comes the *Bent-shoulder* Pharisee, that is the one who feels on his shoulders the weight of the good actions he has done in order to boast of them. Across the twenty centuries one can most easily imagine him: his shoulders bend under the burden of his self-conscious piety, and with a meek voice telling every one as a secret the good deeds he has just performed.

Second is the *Go-about* Pharisee, that is the one who is ever asking to be excused for he must go and perform some act of piety. One can easily picture him: at the most inconvenient, most noticeable moment, he must, he really must, break away from a circle of friends to carry out some far-fetched act of piety.

Third is the *Knock-off* Pharisee, who offers to discount or knock off some bad actions from the list of his many virtuous ones. He acknowledges some

infinitesimally small peccadillo, but incidentally mentions many heroic acts of virtue which he feels sure will make up for his sin.

Fourth is the *Parsimonious* Pharisee, who affects to encroach on his small property in order to do deeds of piety. Of course he is poor, very poor, but even a very poor man like him is sometimes led to acts of extravagance in the cause of religion and charity. "I have given more than I could afford," says he.

Fifth is the *If-I-only-knew-my-faults-I-would* Pharisee, who asks to be told his faults that he may compensate for them by his virtues. Conscious of his spotless integrity, he is pestering people in excess of humility to point out his failings to him—if he has any—that he may forthwith make up for them by extra deeds of sanctity.

Sixth is the *God-fearing* Pharisee. It is the scrupulous man. He is honest enough, but his religion has become a nightmare to him, for he is in perpetual dread of offending the Divine Judge, and incurring eternal punishment.

Seventh is the *God-loving* Pharisee, and he is a Saint.

This is a paraphrase of the passage as it occurs in the treatise on Prayer (Berachoth ix., 7) in the Jerusalem *Talmud*. In the *Talmud* of Babylon it occurs in the treatise on Adultery (Sotah xxii. *b*) but it varies slightly. The first kind of Pharisee is called the *Shechem* Pharisee, from the Old Testament name of the city in Ephraim, and it is said that he, as the Sichemites of old, is a pious Jew for what he can get out of it. A bread-and-butter Pharisee we should say. In Hebrew the word for shoulder and the name

of the city are practically identical, hence the confusion. The second and third kind are called the *Knock-against* and *Bloodletting* Pharisees. The second because he shuffles along, never lifting his feet, he knocks them against everything, the third because he beats his face against a wall rather than look at a woman. For the fourth kind the *Talmud* of Babylon has a totally different name: the *Crusher* Pharisee, because his religion has crushed him down to the ground. The fifth is the same in both *Talmuds;* but the order of the sixth and the seventh is inverted. The *Loving* Pharisee is not loving God, but the lover of gain, he who serves God for the expected reward. The *Fearsome* Pharisee, because he fears God's punishments.

The *Talmud* of Babylon is therefore still harder on the Pharisees than that of Jerusalem, because all seven kinds are objectionable, and none serve God rightly. The precise bearing of the nicknames was apparently forgotten after a while and misunderstood, but that their general meaning is one of half good-humoured contempt there can be no doubt.

There is a curious passage in the Jerusalem *Talmud* (Sotah iii., 4). It is a discussion of the ordeal by the waters of bitterness, which, according to chapter v. of the Book of Numbers, must be administered to a woman suspected of adultery. The possibility is discussed that a woman may be guilty, and yet the effect of the ordeal be delayed. This may be due, so it is maintained, to meritorious acts in her past life, which make up partially for the guilt of adultery. "If the woman possesses some merit, the effect of the ordeal may be suspended, sometimes for a year, or two years." In regard to this Ben Azai said: "A man

therefore is bound to teach the Torah to his daughter, so that, if she be ever made subject to the ordeal of the waters of bitterness, she may experience the effect of her meritorious acts." [If she had never learnt her religion, she could never lay up merit before God, according to Rabbinic ideas.] Rabbi Eleazar said: "Instruction would be useless to her." Rabbi Joshuah said [mockingly]: "A woman prefers a pound with an ordinary man to a hundredweight with a Pharisee." He also said: "A pious fool and a clever rogue, a woman given to Pharisaism or the tricks of the Pharisees—that are the causes of the ruin of the world!"

Then follows an explanation as to what is meant by a woman given to Pharisaism. As a sample of such a woman is mentioned, one who reads the Scripture with prurient mind to snigger over the unsavoury passages.

A few samples are given of Pharisaic "strokes" or tricks. For instance:

A man gives advice to sons, whose father is dead, how to do their mother out of her right of sustenance, on the plea of restitution of her dowry. [The story goes]: the widow of Rabbi Shabtai freely used her sons' inheritance. These sons went to Rabbi Eleazar and complained to him. "I do not know what I can do for you," said he, "but you would be fools if you did not escape having to maintain your mother, by returning her dowry." [According to Jewish Law, a woman, who had her dowry returned to her, had no further right on anything of her husband's property.] On this one of the persons present remarked: "Let me give you some advice: pretend to your mother that you are going to sell your whole property, she will soon ask for her dowry back first, and thus she will lose the right of maintenance from her husband's inheritance." This advice was followed. That very evening the woman

in her turn came to see Rabbi Eleazar to make her complaint. He said: "I see the woman is caught by a Pharisaic trick. I swear I did not mean to injure her, when referring to the restitution of the dowry. I thought the widow wanted it."

This story is particularly instructive, because it shows that a Pharisaic trick was thought to be a very mean one, and also that Rabbi Eleazar did not consider himself a Pharisee.

Another story, which occurs in the treatise Pea viii., 8, is also very telling. A student of Rabbi possessed only the sum of 200 *sus* minus a *dinar*. This sum was insufficient for his keep, and hence he was entitled to a dole from charitable funds. Rabbi once every three years used to give this young man his quota of the poor rate. The young man's fellow-students, however, looked with envy on this and added to the student's property just enough to make him no longer entitled to the dole. When Rabbi wanted as usual to give him his dole, the student said: "I am not entitled, I possess just enough." "That boy has been caught by a Pharisaic trick," said Rabbi; "under the pretext of giving him something, his fellow-students have done him out of a good thing." He then bade the student to go to his hoard and take away one coin. In consequence the student was technically entitled again to the dole, which Rabbi was pleased to continue as before.

Another trick is mentioned: A girl, who pretends to great religious austerities to cover up her misconduct. A widow, who has been visiting the sick, with the real purpose of spreading malignant gossip. Another item is added of a boy of precocious sexual development, who commits incest and escapes

punishment on the plea of his youth, though he lets his victims suffer. There can hardly be a doubt that the writers of these passages would have heartily endorsed the equation: Pharisees = Hypocrites!

It would, however, be bitterly unjust to accuse all Jews contemporary with Our Lord of being Pharisees. The Pharisees were but one Jewish sect.

We have some indication of their numerical strength in a passage of Josephus concerning the Pharisees shortly before the Christian era.

> When all the rest of the people gave assurance by oath of their good will to the Emperor (Augustus) and to the king's (Herod's) government, these very men [the Pharisees], who were more than 6,000, would not swear; and when the king imposed a fine upon them, the wife of Pheroras (Herod's brother) paid the fine for them.

The Pharisees then were a strictly limited brotherhood. They called themselves by the title "haberim," companions or brethren, or sometimes "the pious ones." The name Pharisees or Separatists was probably at first a nickname, meaning as much as "peculiar people." Later on it was adopted by themselves, though but rarely used. They drew a contrast between themselves and the "common people," the *amha-arez,* who knew not the Law. They regarded these "common people," of whom many lived in Galilee, as in a state of perpetual legal defilement because of their ignorance of the laws regulating ritual cleanness.

In recent years a number of interesting and scholarly studies have been written in defence of the Pharisees. These studies, though valuable for many details of comparison between Rabbinic literature and the New Testament, are faulty in main outline.

They take it for granted, that Pharisaism and Judaism are identical, and claim for Pharisaism all that is noble and good in Judaism. They select from the *Talmud,* from the *Mishna, Tosefta,* from the *Baraithas,* from the *Midrashim,* from Philo, from Ecclesiasticus, and even Proverbs, a great number of passages which express noble and exalted sentiments; they gather edifying stories of the rabbis, and compare these to the New Testament. These sources cover at least some four or five hundred years, and are only to a small extent exactly contemporary with the Gospels. To give a selection of moral sentiments and practices drawn from this vast literature, neglecting its main character, is to lose a sense of proportion. Compare the New Testament with any sections of equal length of the *Mishna,* and the profound difference of the New Testament is instantaneously manifest.

Besides, as it would be folly in Christians to apply all Christ's denunciations against the Pharisees to the whole body of the Jews, so it is likewise folly to attribute all that is praiseworthy in Judaism to the influence of Pharisaism. Christians claim the Old Testament for theirs as much as those Jews did, who rejected Jesus as their Messiah. What is good and praiseworthy in Judaism is surely due not to what the Pharisees taught in contrast to Christianity, but to what the Old Testament taught to both Jews and Christians. To ascribe the virtues of two thousand years of post-Christian Judaism to the influence of Pharisaism is surely to go beyond the data of history. It has been well said that Christianity is Christ, but Judaism is not bound up with the story of any Pharisee, or for that matter of all the Pharisees

known to history. It may be more truly said that Judaism is the Old Testament. What is ethically noble, what is undying and imperishable in Judaism, is due to the Prophets of the Old Testament and not to the Pharisees. It is the Torah that has made the Jew what he is, not that meticulous and scrupulous application of Mosaic ritual and civil laws, which is associated with the Pharisees. The Jew is what he is, because he still believes in the Old Testament, not because he disbelieves in the New.

The Pharisees, then, in the first century were an exclusive society, a sort of religious freemasonry within Jewry. The members of the craft were closely bound to one another. Each member undertook in the presence of three other members that he would remain true to the laws of the brotherhood. Now, a vital condition of membership was that a member should abstain from everything that was not tithed. This placed an impassable barrier between the Pharisee and the bulk of the people. A quotation from the *Mishna* treatise "Demai" will make this clear. Demai is the technical term for vegetable food (fruit and corn) obtained by purchase or otherwise from "the common people" the "amhaarez," who were presumed to be careless or ignorant in the observance of the minor tithes. Demai therefore was "doubtful" matter, which the true Pharisee could not eat until these minor tithes had been taken, that is the so-called *Terumah Maaser* and the *Maaser Sheni*.

Anyone who has taken upon himself to be trustworthy, is bound to tithe all that he eats or sells or receives, and he cannot be a guest to "common people." But Rabbi Jehudah said: "Even he who is the guest of common

people is trustworthy." But the majority said to him: If he is not trustworthy in himself (by eating of doubtfully tithed food at the table of common people) how can he be trustworthy to others? He who takes it upon himself to be a *Haber* (a Pharisee, an associate) must not sell fruit to common people, whether the fruit be fresh or dried, nor buy from them fresh fruit. [Dried fruit he may buy, because unless some moisture has fallen on it, it is not apt to contract ritual uncleanness.] Nor does he become the guest of common people, or ask the common man as guest on account of the common man's clothing. [This may be ritually unclean, through contact with a woman at certain times, unheeded by the careless.] Rabbi Jehudah: Neither is he allowed to be a breeder of small cattle, he must be careful in his vows and his jests, not contract ritual impurity from the dead, and he must attend the Synagogue. But the majority answered him: "That does not belong to the undertaking of a *Haber* (or Pharisee)." Only Bakers (if they are Pharisees) are, according to the decision of the majority of rabbis, bound to set aside the contributions of the *Maaser* and *Hallah*. Pedlars (if Pharisees) are not allowed to sell Demai goods, *i.e.*, goods originally purchased from common people, and therefore doubtfully tithed. Wholesale dealers, naturally, do not come under this law. It is permissible to give Demai food to the poor or to soldiers. Rabbi Gamaliel gave Demai food to his labourers.

The Pharisees therefore were cut off not merely from the Gentile world, but even from the bulk of their own people. We can now realize how shocking it was to the Pharisees that Jesus of Nazareth, who claimed to teach the higher degrees of sanctity, should eat with publicans and sinners. Every morsel He ate at their table was Demai!

Another example to illustrate the relations of the Pharisees to the "common people":

An earthenware vessel closed with a fixed lid can protect everything contained therein from ritual uncleanness, said

the School of Hillel, but the School of Shammai says: it protects only food and drink and other smaller earthenware vessels contained therein. The School of Hillel asked: Why? The School of Shammai answered: "Because with the common people (the amha-arez) such vessels are to be regarded as themselves unclean, and what is itself unclean cannot protect other things from uncleanness." The School of Hillel insisted: "And yet you declare food and drink enclosed therein clean!" But the School of Shammai replied: "If we declared the food or drink ritually clean, we meant clean for the common man but if you declare the vessel itself clean, you declare it clean for yourself as well as for him."

The reader must remember that metal or wooden vessels could be rendered ritually clean from *ordinary* ritual defilement by being once dipped in water. Hence such vessels, used by "the common man," could be borrowed and used by the Pharisees on conditions of being once dipped in this way. Earthenware vessels, however, were not so borrowed, neither was food or drink, for they could not thus be rendered clean. The earthenware vessel of "the common man" must be presumed unclean by the Pharisee, and in this particular case, because of the presence of a dead body, it was unclean for seven days, and to be cleansed by the ashes of a red heifer. The School of Hillel finally ceded the point to the School of Shammai, and there was one more barrier between the Pharisees and their neighbours. (Edujot i., 14.)

The following episode, told in the same treatise, gives us an insight into the mentality of Pharisaic circles of those days.

"Akabja, son of Mahalalel, attested the fact of four decisions of the majority of rabbis. People said to him: Akabja, withdraw the four decisions which

you have attested, and we will make you Vice-president of the Sanhedrin. He answered: I would rather be called a fool all my life long than stand before my God as a criminal for an hour (by denying the decisions of the majority, which were law in Israel). He had declared ritually clean, first, the white hair that sometimes remains on the skin of a leper after cure; secondly, discoloured blood. Thirdly, he had declared it lawful, after the slaughter of cattle, in the case of a firstborn rejected by the priests on account of a flaw, to use the hair of the hide which had fallen out and been laid aside. It was agreed on all hands that it could not be *shaved* off while the animal was living, it was a question of the hair "fallen out." The permission to use even this hair was regarded as criminal. Fourthly, he had said that the ordeal of the waters of bitterness should not be administered to a proselyte or to a slave woman. The majority of rabbis held otherwise, they said to him: It happened once that Shemaya and Abtalion (the famous rabbis in the days of Herod the Great) administered this ordeal to a woman of Carchemish, who lived as a freed slave in Jerusalem. He replied: They did not give her "waters of bitterness," but only a draught somewhat like it. The rabbis in consequence excommunicated Akabja, and he died under the excommunication, and they threw stones on his grave.

"Rabbi Jehudah said: God forbid that it should have been Akabja, who was smitten by excommunication, for *he* was without equal in wisdom and fear of sin amongst the sons of Israel! It was Eliazar ben Chanoch, who neglected the washing of hands! When he was dead, the Court did send to throw a

stone on his grave. This tells us that when an excommunicated person dies, his grave must be stoned. In the hour of his death this Eliazar said to his son: Son of mine, abandon the four points of doctrine which I have maintained! The son asked: Why then did not you yourself abandon them? The father replied: Because I took them from the mouth of the majority and my opponents say they took theirs from the mouth of the majority. I stuck to my tradition, and they stuck to theirs. But you, my son, have only me, a single individual against them who are the majority, better therefore to leave me and hold with them! The son said: Father, recommend me to your fellow-Pharisees! He answered: No; your own acts should connect or disconnect you with them."

It is quite plain that numerically the Pharisees were but a small section of the Jewish people, but they clearly wielded an influence far beyond their numbers. In fact they seem to have been by far the strongest religious influence in Palestine during the first century of our era. There were other sects: the Essenes and the Sadducees, but the Pharisees far overshadowed them in importance.

They seem to have exercised paramount influence at the beginning of the reign of John Hyrkanus, about one hundred and thirty years before Christ. This Maccabean high priest, however, at first in their favour, left their party and supported the Sadducees. A Pharisee had cast doubts on the legitimacy of his birth and urged him to resign the high priesthood; this insult he never forgave. For a time they were under the frown of the Government, but in the reign of Queen Alexandra, widow of Alexander Jannaeus, they were once more in favour. We know nothing of

them during the period of national disturbances previous to the accession of Herod the Great, when they refused the oath to Herod and Augustus. The Pharisees were distinctly the popular party. The majority seem to have been of the middle class, or what we might call lower middle class.

Their influence over the multitude, which was undoubtedly great, was due to two things; they maintained old customs, and they took religion seriously. They maintained old customs; they were the champions of sacred traditions; they were the embodiment of all the people regarded as characteristically Jewish. They constituted the people themselves guardians of their own hallowed traditions. Any layman had as much right to interpret the Scriptures as the high priest himself, and the time-honoured interpretations, especially of the ceremonial laws in the Scriptures, had to be maintained. This, the people, to whom homely customs, entwined with daily domestic life, specially appeal, loved and cherished.

And again, they took religion seriously, or at least claimed to do so. They impressed the people. The maintenance of the purity laws in all their strictness meant a life of continual self-restraint. The Pharisees kept them with fanatical precision. They fasted and prayed and certainly made no secret of it. Some of these men were sincere fanatics. The sect, though mocked by some, inspired respect and even awe in the untutored crowd. The highest religious and civil authorities in the land dared not offend public opinion. The Pharisees created public opinion and swayed the populace. They were 'the holy men' in the eyes of the crowd. Their very isolation, their punctiliousness, their separation from the common herd, their

scrupulosity, their insistence on ritual purity, made the ordinary man gape at them as marvels of sanctity. Human nature would not have been human nature if, under this system, the Pharisees had not contracted some of the vices attendant on religious self-assertion, self-righteousness, externalism, formalism, and holiness, by observance of rules of physical purity. Surely no Indian code of taboos is more exacting than many treatises of the *Mishna,* which are monuments of maddening scrupulosity, which sometimes seem to verge on actual insanity. If the pride of caste worked less harm in Judæa than in India, if the Indian high caste holy man is different from the Pharisee, this is not due to the fact of the Indian code being more minute than that of the Pharisee, but to the fact that the Pharisee was a firm believer in one personal good God, and was in possession of Holy Writ, the glory of which could not be totally dimmed even by Pharisaism.

The Pharisee, not because he was a Pharisee, but because he was a Jew, believed in the resurrection of the dead, and in retribution after death. The Sadducee did not represent Jewish religious mentality, he was an archaic survival of primitive days, and belonged to the *intelligentsia,* which in all ages is apt to be sceptical. Although the Pharisees believed in the Resurrection, and that not only of the soul but of the body also, a resurrection to a happy life in the Messianic kingdom, they seem to have held the quaintest views on matters of further detail. Josephus makes them believers in the transmigration of souls, and the *Mishna* does not suggest an eternal punishment for sinful Jews, whatever may have been the lot of the idolatrous pagans. Rabbi

Akiba said: There are five things which last twelve months. The judgment on the generations of the Flood lasted twelve months, the judgment on Job lasted twelve months, the judgment on the Egyptians lasted twelve months, the judgment to come on Gog and Magog will last twelve months, the judgment on the wicked in Gehenna will last twelve months. Rabbi Jochanan ben Nuri said: As long as from Passover to Pentecost. Both rabbis quoted Scripture texts to prove their point, but seven weeks in hell for the wicked is not an opinion of extravagant severity. It cannot have been very common.

It is quite a mistake to look upon the Pharisees as a political party, seething with sedition against the Roman power, urging the people to rise against their oppressor. The Pharisees were rather people of compromise in this matter. They naturally hated the foreign tyrant, but so did every Jew. The Pharisees counselled submission to the powers that be, as long as the Torah could be taught and its laws observed. Din hammalkuth din: "the law of the State *is* law" was their motto. They were too much concerned with minute points of casuistry to care for politics as such. Even in the last rebellion it was only Rabbi 'Akiba who supported the mad Messiah Bar-Cocheba. How long the Pharisees as a distinct party in Jewry remained in existence, cannot be said with certainty, but indirectly their influence has remained in that collection of Jewish Laws called the *Mishna,* a collection gathered together in the second century after Christ, a collection which strongly breathes the Pharisaic spirit, and which became to later Jewry almost as sacrosanct as Holy Writ itself, and which in the *Talmud* Jew of to-day still finds some expression.

# CHAPTER VII

## THE SADDUCEES

THE aristocrats in Israel were Sadducees. The aristocrats were mostly to be found among the priestly families, hence the priesthood was to a great extent Sadducee, but not exclusively so. There were priests, mostly of the lower ranks, who were Pharisees. Under the Maccabean Priest-Kings, it was only natural that an aristocracy should have been formed from the priestly orders. The later Maccabean princes were intensely worldly, and created an atmosphere of religious indifference around themselves.

Not indeed that there was ever a danger of the priesthood again abandoning the cult of Jahveh in order to stand well with a heathen king; no, the rising in B.C. 164 under Judas Maccabeus had made that for ever an impossibility. While retaining the worship of Jahveh, and carrying out the prescriptions of the Mosaic Law, the high priests could, however, be given to such lax views on doctrinal matters that it is hard to see what real religion was left to them.

We must not think of the Sadducees as an homogeneous party, with a definite organization, or as people belonging to a rigid school with sharply defined tenets, and an organization with strict rules. In this they differed from the Pharisees. The Pharisees were men of ideals, however cramped and crooked we may think those ideals. They were men

of zeal, though not according to discretion. The Sadducees on the other hand were without enthusiasm or exalted aim. Their attitude was, to a large extent, merely negative. They had no religious message to their generation. In the political field they counted, but nowhere else. Once the national existence of Jewry was destroyed they soon disappeared from history. The main bond of unity of the party had gone with the attempt to please the powers that were, by ostentatious "liberal-mindedness" in religious matters.

On the other hand it would be a mistake to conclude that all Sadducees were either priests or wealthy and influential people. The driving force of the party was certainly found in a small coterie of aristocratic highpriestly families, but there was a large fringe of people who hung on to the party because it represented, or seemed to represent, old toryism, and to retain some of the glamour of the ancient days of the Asmonean dynasty, and contrasted with the plebeian vulgarity of Pharisaism, in which tinkers and cobblers had turned theologians.

Moreover, the almost unbearable burden of scrupulous observances which the Pharisees laid upon the shoulders of the people, the hypocrisy which always dogs every attempt at excessive external rigorism, and the assumption of superior sanctity in the few who kept the 311 precepts, must have had its recoil in the minds of many, and led them into the camp of the Sadducees, though the Sadducees always remained the minority.

There seems to be little doubt that the name Sadducee originally meant adherent of the House of Zadok, the legitimate highpriestly line since the days

of Solomon. During the Babylonian exile, Ezechiel stresses the leadership of the House of Zadok, that is the predominance of the family that functioned at Jerusalem over the country priests elsewhere. The word Sadducee, however, is first met with some 100 years before Christ, to designate the dynastic party against the more democratic Pharisees. The occasion of its first use is not known, but in all likelihood, when dissatisfaction with the Asmonean family grew in the minds of the Jews, the party that clung to these Priest-Kings came to be called Sadokites or Sadducees.

Their peculiar religious views were no doubt a matter of slow development. The only thing which apparently from the beginning was their fundamental conviction was the sufficiency of the Written Word without the tradition of the Elders. The Bible and the Bible only was, according to them, the religion of Jewry. The letter of the law and nothing more, without the agelong accretions of popular customs. The Pharisees acknowledged the absolute binding force of a decision of the majority of rabbis, the Sadducees knew no such authority. The Law sufficed; in the few cases where the Law needed interpreting, the lawful priesthood was there to make laws for the people. The practical usurpation of legislative power by a class of self-appointed lawyers was surely the thing which galled the Sadducees most. The more so, as they did not dare to go against these self-appointed lawyers, because they had the populace behind them. Josephus tells us: "Even the Sadducees in the exercise of their functions, act according to the demands of the Pharisees, for otherwise the multitude would not bear with them." Later on

we shall give instances of the petty acts of resistance on which they sometimes ventured.

We learn from the Acts of the Apostles: "The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit, but the Pharisees confess both." Although the denial of the angel or spirit world seems at first irreconcilable with any profession of Judaism whatever, it is in harmony with what we know of the Sadducees from other sources. As the Scriptures distinctly speak of angels, they probably interpreted these texts of manifestations of the Deity itself, and not to individual beings distinct from God. The denial of the resurrection might at first be thought to be merely the rejection of a resurrection of the body, and the earthly kingdom of the Messias to be set up after Israel's rising from the dead, in a physical and bodily sense. There can, however, be no doubt that in many if not most cases, their infidelity went deeper than that, and meant a doubt and even a direct denial of personal immortality. The stress they laid on the principle of virtue for virtue's sake, and not for the sake of the reward, has a suspicious ring about it. It is the usual grandiloquent pretence which hides the naked denial of the soul's survival.

Ancient Jewish legend may contain some historic reminiscence in this matter. Antigonus of Socho (c. B.C. 200) received the traditions from Simon the Just. He said: "'Be not like unto servants, who serve the Lord for the sake of the reward, but be like those who without regard to the reward give their services. Let the fear of God be ever with you that your reward may be double in the future.'" This teaching they taught to their disciples and these

again to theirs. Then there arose people, who afterwards began to debate about it and said: "What did our fathers really mean when they spoke like this? Is it possible that a labourer should work the whole day, and not receive his pay in the evening? Had our fathers known that there is a life to come and a resurrection of the dead, they would not have spoken in this strain." The people rose against the Tora and forsook it, and from them a twofold heresy arose: the Sadducees and the Boethusians, the former after the name of Zadok, the latter after that of Boethus.

The Boethusians were a section of the Sadducees, and were so called afer the family Boethus, that gave six high Priests to Israel in the first century, and who left a reputation for ruthless violence in Pharisaic circles.

Anyone acquainted with the Book of Ecclesiastes may well be forgiven, if he thought: Had our fathers known that there is a life to come, and a resurrection of the dead, they would not have spoken in this strain.

It is admitted on all hands that the Old Testament revelation was a progressive one. The silence about the after-life in the earlier centuries of Israel was no doubt deliberate, that the superstitions concerning the dead and ancestor worship should take no root in the House of Jacob. But this silence left the people's minds very vague about life beyond the grave. Survival of a kind was, of course, generally admitted, but contained no bright hopes for the Israelites, if even the pious amongst them could write Ecclesiastes or the Song of Ezechias. Since the Babylonian Captivity, and more strongly so during the two centuries preceding the birth of Christ, the blessed hope of a

glorious after-life for the just had grown in intensity, till it became a bright flame in the days of Christ. Maybe the Pharisees mixed some puerilities with this shining hope, but the Sadducees, old conservatives as they were, were not much touched by the newer enthusiasms, and the wealthy and comfortable classes felt little need for a spiritual reward after death. The mocking attitude of the Sadducees is well portrayed in the Gospels, when they are described coming to Christ and asking the ludicrous question: what was to happen in the next world to a woman, who had had seven husbands in this; whose wife would she be? The Pharisees, usually so antagonistic to Christ, enjoyed His answer to their hereditary opponents. A further point of difference which Josephus brings out between Sadducees and Pharisees is the following: The Pharisees, without denying the freedom of the human will, ascribed a predominant influence to the Providence of God; they believed what all orthodox Jews believed, that every human will, though free, remained in the power of God, and all human affairs were under the control of the Divine Will. The Sadducees, on the other hand, emphasized the freedom of the will to such an extent that God's Providence was reduced to a minimum. They were, no doubt, compelled to acknowledge the Old Testament miracles, but they certainly expected none in their own day, God they would acknowledge to be in heaven, but they considered that He would let this world follow its laws, and men follow their own devices.

Not, indeed, that the Sadducees, like schoolmen, maintained abstruse theses on free will and predestination; they merely proclaimed it common sense

that men should help themselves, and not trust to interferences from above. They spoke as many a man speaks to-day: everyone makes his own heaven and hell in this world, of what the next world will bring—if there is a next world—it is useless to speculate. Sadducees therefore, were just Deists, whose religion did not go far beyond the outward observance of the established forms of worship. Strange to say that they could be great sticklers for law and order, and even for matters of religious ceremonial, where they thought they had the better of the letter of the law.

There is some literature extant which had its origin in Sadducean circles. The most striking pieces are the so-called "Book of Jubilees," or Little Genesis, of more than a century before Christ, and the "Sadokite Fragment" of a century after Christ, found by Professor Schechter. Unfortunately, we possess nothing exactly contemporary with Our Lord. The first work purports to be a revelation, but is really a paraphrase of parts of Genesis and Exodus, with added legendary matter. It has for aim to introduce the solar Calendar instead of the lunar one, a bold attempt indeed, in Israel. It is written by a priest, and recounts the story of the world from the creation of the world to the early days of Moses, and it divides human history in Jubilee periods of forty-nine years (7 x 7), not fifty years, as one might conclude from Leviticus xxv., 10-11. The author's sacred text cannot have contained these words. It is written in the interest of the reigning dynasty of Levitical Kings. The Messianic blessing, to come from Judah, is barely touched upon, though it is not formally denied. A Davidic Messias is not referred to.

Belief in a future life is not rejected in so many words, but practically passed over in silence. Of Abraham it is said (ch. xxiii., 1) "he slept the sleep of eternity and was gathered to his fathers," but in the same chapter we read of the righteous in Messianic times: "their bones will rest in the earth, and their spirits will have much joy." This sentence may point to a belief in a blessed state of survival of the just in the Messianic kingdom, without, of course, any bodily resurrection of the dead. This passing remark, however, on which no further stress is laid, is the only more or less definite allusion to a future life of happiness; on the other hand Hell, or "Sheol," is pictured in a few practical passages as a place of punishment for the wicked. The existence of angels, however, is not only admitted, but even elaborated and emphasized. The author, therefore, is no thorough-going Sadducee in doctrinal matters, otherwise he would have cut out these references, even in the poetry which he quotes. The party had probably much deteriorated in the first century of our era, and as the populace more and more emphasized their belief in immortality and resurrection, the comfortable higher classes expressed more freely their mocking scepticism or denial.

More puzzling still is the document found by Professor Schechter in 1910. This is a book of the covenant of Sadducees at Damascus, written soon after the revolt of Barcocheba, say, about A.D. 140, or perhaps earlier. The covenanters distinctly claim the title "Bene Sadok" or Sadducees. They are clearly Sadducees in that they reject the tradition of the Elders as an authority, distinct from the text of Scripture. They are typically Sadducee in practically

omitting any reference to the life hereafter. The work is fragmentary, and some allusions to the hope of blessed immortality may have occurred in the missing parts. The existence of the angel world, however, is admitted. They are ruthlessly strict in enforcing the letter of the Law with regard to the observance of the Sabbath, stricter even than the Pharisees. Most remarkable is their maintenance of monogamy, and their polemics against the plurality of wives, and also against divorce, matters after all distinctly permitted in the Old Testament. Whatever these covenanters were, they were certainly not laxists.

Since the appearance of this document many people feel inclined somewhat to change their estimate of the Sadducees. They were evidently not all scoffers or practical unbelievers. Jewish covenanters and puritans would not proudly have claimed descent from Sadducees, and would not have maintained themselves for many generations, as they did, if the Sadducees had merely been a set of unbelievers. Though the leaders of the party, the high-priestly families, in Our Lord's day, and the aristocracy that surrounded them, were what the New Testament says, there must have been many of the rank and file, who, though, hazy about the details of the life after death, had still some of the sound piety of the author of Ecclesiastes and of Ben Sira, or Ecclesiasticus, as he is called in the Catholic Bible.

Our Greek copies of Ecclesiasticus lack a passage which occurs in the original Hebrew, and which no doubt belonged to the book in its first form :

Give thanks unto Him that gathereth the outcasts of Israel,
For His mercy endureth for ever.

Give thanks unto Him that buildeth His City and His Sanctuary,
For His mercy endureth for ever.
Give thanks unto Him that maketh a horn to sprout for the house of David,
For His mercy endureth for ever.
Give thanks unto Him that hath chosen the Sons of Zadok for the priesthood,
For His mercy endureth for ever.

This passage shows the religious enthusiasm which the Sadducean party could inspire a century and a half before Christ's coming, and the "Sons of Zadok" never did completely lose all power to attract the sons of Israel. The covenanters of Damascus seem later on to have given birth to the Karaite Jews—Jews, independent of the Pharisaic development of Judaism—and thus, even to-day, have not ceased to exist.

Let us give some practical examples to show how Sadducees and Pharisees jostled one another, struggled and strove together, two thousand years ago.

They disagreed, for instance, on the correct day of keeping Pentecost. They both believed that it had to be the fiftieth day after the offering of the first sheaf of corn, according to the prescription of Leviticus xxiii., 9ff., the question was whether this lifting up of the sheaf before the Lord was commanded for the day after Passover, whatever day of the week that might be, or for the day after the Sabbath, *i.e.*, the Saturday in Passover week.

The correct day for Whitsun had been a problem for many generations, owing to the ambiguity of the text. From the Book of Jubilees we learn that some people even advocated to render the crucial word

"Sabbath" neither "rest day," nor "Saturday," but "*week*," and therefore, maintained that Sheaf-day was always to be a complete week after Passover, and thus Pentecost the fifty-seventh day after Passover. Whether they ever succeeded to convince many people of their ideas we do not know. At the beginning of our era only the two first-mentioned opinions were in the field. The Sadducees always made First-Sheaf-day a Sunday, *i.e.*, the day after the Sabbath, or Saturday in Easterweek. In consequence, for them Whitsun always fell on a Sunday also, just as is the case with us Christians to-day. The Pharisees were most bitterly opposed to this. According to them, First-Sheaf-day had to be the day immediately after Passover, and hence Whitsun also could fall on any day of the week.

In reality the Sadducees had the best of argument as far as the text is concerned; the normal meaning of Sabbath is just the Sabbath, or our Saturday. The Pharisees stuck less closely to the text by interpreting it as "rest day," and referring it to Passover itself. None the less, the Sadducees were afraid to go against their fanatical opponents in practice, for they had the mob behind them. The struggle was fierce and long. Even after the Temple was destroyed, and there could be no question of offering any sheaves of corn or any sacrifices, the redoubtable Pharisee, Johannan Ben Zaccai, who had survived the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, had the following furious dispute about it.

Pentecost always to fall on a Sunday?! You fools, how do you know that?

*A Sadducean Elder.*—Moses, our teacher, loved Israel, and as he knew that Pentecost lasted only for one day,

he went and put it on the day after the Sabbath, so that Israel might rejoice for two days in sequence.

*Johannan ben Zaccai.* —It is only eleven days' journey from Horeb to Mount Seir according to Deuteronomy i. 2. Why, then, if Moses, our teacher, loved Israel, did they roam in the desert, not eleven days, but forty years?

*The Sadducean Elder.*—Rabbi: do you think you can get rid of me with such a short remark as that?

*Johannan ben Zaccai.*—You fool! Our perfect Law is not as your useless chatter! There is one text which says: Ye shall count fifty days between First-Sheaf-day and Whitsun, and another text: seven complete weeks. This shows clearly enough that the weeks are not always whole weeks, from Saturday to Saturday.

On the authority of Philo the Jew, Our Lord's contemporary, we know that in the first century the Pharisaic calendar was usually observed. There seems, however, to have been a perpetual struggle by the Pharisees to have Passover on the Saturday, and by the Sadducees to have it on Sunday, for if Passover fell on a Saturday, Whitsun would in any case fall on a Sunday, which annoyed the Pharisees, and rejoiced the heart of the Sadducees. Many scholars think that this was the case in the year of Our Lord's death. The Pharisees, with the bulk of the people, kept Passover on the Friday, and so did Our Lord, the Sadducean high priests kept it on the Saturday. The Synoptics, Matthew, Mark and Luke, refer to the Pharisaic Passover: St. John, to the Sadducean.

However this may be, the struggle sometimes gave rise to childish and humorous incidents.

In order ostentatiously to defy the Sadducees, the Pharisees when Passover had been on a Friday, and therefore, the First-Sheaf-day was on the following day, a Sabbath, on which otherwise no work

whatever might be done, gathered the cutters of the First Sheaf in a great crowd and then performed what almost seems a pantomime.

The cutters solemnly asked: Has the sun set? The crowd shouted back: Yes! Again they asked, Has the sun set? Again the crowd shouted: Yes! For the third time they asked: Has the sun set? and the crowd again shouted: Yes! Is this the scythe? Yes! Question and answer thrice repeated as above. Is this the box to lay the sheaf in? Yes! Thrice repeated, as above. Is this the Sabbath? Yes! When the third shout had come in reply, the cutters started to cut and bind the sheaf with much to do, and all this to aggravate the Sadducees. The Sadducees on their side tried to circumvent the Pharisees. In order to make Passover fall on a Saturday, which would make Whitsun a Sunday, they descended to common bribery and fraud. As all depended on the precise moment of the New Moon of the 1st of Nisan, they suborned witnesses to testify that they had seen the New Moon, the day before it was visible. The laughable story is told of two bribed witnesses, who came before the Calendar Committee. The first seriously gave his perjured testimony that he had seen the New Moon, and went his way. But the second spoke roguishly after this fashion:

"I saw the New Moon on its back between two rocks, its head was that of a calf, and its ears those of a little goat! When I saw this I fell on my back from astonishment, and lo and behold! I found two hundred shillings (*zuz*) in my purse!"

The Calendar Commission said to him: "Well, you can keep the money as a present, but the people who bribed you ought to be brought here and

scourged. What made you meddle in these matters?"

He said: "I heard the Boethusians, a subdivision of the Sadducees, tried to cheat the rabbis, and I thought it a good thing to inform them."

Only if we keep all this in mind, can we understand the painful and elaborate precautions in the *Mishna* to test the witnesses for the New Moon. In those days the calendar depended on the ocular testimony of the visibility of that satellite.

Even the Pharisees could not prevent, however, that Passover sometimes fell on a Friday, which meant Pentecost on a Saturday. In such cases the Festal Holocaust of Pentecost had to be postponed to the Sunday. Now, lest the Sadducees should give the impression that it was Pentecost itself that was kept on the Sunday, the Pharisees enacted that on such occasions the high priest was not allowed to wear his Aaronic vestments, and that the day might be observed as a fast day, and as a day for funerals! Thus for generations, Sadducees and Pharisees fought with every conceivable weapon, the first to keep Pentecost on, the second to keep it off, Sunday. Finally, about A.D. 60, when the Pharisaic triumph was complete, the Pharisees declared the week before and the week after Passover (*i.e.*, 8 to 21 Nisan) as festal days, on which no public mourning was permitted, in remembrance of their victory over the Sadducees.

One characteristically feeble attempt of the Sadducees to strike at the Pharisees is on record. The Pharisees held that on the Day of Atonement the high priests should put the incense in the censer

AFTER his entrance into the Holy of Holies, the Sadducees that he should do it BEFORE. Once a high priest had the courage of his convictions, and put the incense in before he entered. Later on he boasted of his courage to his own father and said: "Though you interpreted the Scripture (Lev. xvi., 13) your life long in this way, you have not acted accordingly till I came and did it!" His father answered: "Though we are Sadducees, we have to mind the Pharisees. I would be surprised if you had a long life." The tale goes that he died after a few days. Some say that as he issued from the Holy of Holies, worms crawled from his nose, and the mark of an angel foot was visible on his forehead.

Not merely in ritual and ceremonial did Sadducees and Pharisees differ, but in the administration of the criminal code. It may seem strange at first that the Sadducees were regarded as the stricter party, the Pharisees the milder one. On second thoughts, however, one realizes that though sudden outbursts of popular anger may be terrible, the multitude is quickly swayed to mercy, and the aristocratic conservative spirit, especially if bound to a hard unchangeable sacred text, would lean to ruthless rigour. According to the Sadducean Book of Jubilees, *Lex Talionis:* "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," had to be applied literally, the murderer had to die the exact kind of death he had inflicted on his victim. Pharisaic executions would take a less barbaric form. In cases of damage caused by living beings under man's control the Sadducees extended this compensation even to damages done by one's servants or slaves, and this beyond the clear text of Exodus xxi., 32, 35, where only ox and ass is mentioned. This

extension, though in accordance with natural law, went beyond the Sadducean principle of : the text and the text alone. On the other hand there is another instance in which the Pharisees, not the Sadducees, held the harsher view. They urged for the death of a perjured witness in a criminal case even if his victim had his innocence vindicated in time and escaped execution. In the matter of ritual cleanliness or uncleanness, a matter which overshadowed almost everything else in the Jewish mind, the Sadducees of course admitted the Biblical legislation, but they scoffed at Pharisaic scrupulosity, which had in addition to Scripture precepts multiplied regulations for legal purity almost to infinity.

A Sadducean humorist remarked of the Pharisees : Believe me, they will try to sprinkle the sun next to keep it ritually clean !

There was just one point in which the Sadducees required higher ritual purity than the Pharisees, that was the case of the priest preparing the sacred water which contained the ashes of a red heifer. The Pharisees in childish malice sought secretly to procure causes for ritual defilement of the poor man to embarrass and insult the Sadducees.

On the other hand the Sadducees lost no opportunity to reduce Pharisaic scrupulosity to absurdity.

Supposing a man poured water out of a ritually clean vessel into a virtually unclean one, would the streaming water, while passing from the one vessel to the other, be clean or unclean ? They mockingly maintained against the Pharisees, that it would be unclean.

Another discussion :

*Sadducees.*—You are wrong in holding that touching

books of Holy Scripture does, and that touching the books of Homer does not, render a man impure.

*Johannan ben Zaccai.*—Is that the only thing of the kind you can object to the Pharisees? The Pharisees also say that the bones of an ass are ritually clean, whereas the bones of John the Highpriest would be unclean.

*Sadducees.*—That is because bones are declared unclean in the ratio of the love borne to the living to which they belonged. Lest a man should carve spoons out of the bones of his father and mother!

*Johannan ben Zaccai.*—Precisely so. The books of Holy Scripture are a parallel case. It is a mark of affection for them that we consider the touch of them to render impure. No one cares for the books of Homer, hence their touch does not defile.

Another discussion:

*A Galilean heretic* (another text says: a Sadducee).—I blame you Pharisees for writing the name of Secular Sovereign by the side of the name of Moses on legal documents.

*A Pharisee.*—We blame you, Galilean heretic, for writing the name of the Sovereign on the same page with the name of God, and what's worse, writing the sovereign's name first and God's name afterwards, in the text Exod. v., 2. Pharaoh said: Who is Jahveh?

Such are the little amenities of Jewish debate, as they have come down to us across twenty centuries.

Sometimes it came from words to petty annoyances in act.

A number of Jews living in the same courtyard or in a street blocked off from the public thoroughfare could in fiction of law declare this space as "private dwelling" by depositing in common a little food in the courtyard or street. This was regularly done, for on Sabbath one was not allowed to carry anything whatever outside one's house. This little legal device gave people more liberty and fresh air on a Sabbath.

Rabban Gamaliel, the teacher of St. Paul, tells a tale. "Once a Sadducee lived with us in the same courtyard in Jerusalem. My father said once to us: Quick! bring all the pots and pans into the courtyard lest that Sadducee should come and bring in something which would render the courtyard unfit for us."

The Sadducees were notorious for objecting to this Pharisaic device of Erubin, as it was called. It was an evasion of the mere letter of the law, to make a private enclosure of a really public place. Moreover, Sadducean residences were usually spacious enough not to require such devices for the Sabbath, these were sought after in the slums. Once a courtyard was thus declared private, even a Sadducee's protest was unavailing.

This gives us an insight in the usual bickerings at street corners in Our Lord's day. Christ, who owed allegiance neither to Pharisees nor Sadducees, warned His disciples against the leaven of them both, as the Gospel tells us. Nor were these bickerings, I am afraid, limited to public life, they must have entered the family circle. There is an ominous reference to this in the regulations that the wives of Sadducean husbands, if they accept their husband's principles, are to be regarded as being in a state of permanent ritual defilement, as the common people, who know not the law. As all sources tell us that Jewish women folk were strongly under the influence of Pharisaism, the most awkward situations must have arisen in the intimacy of household.

Thanks be to God the study of these obscure quarrels of long ago only brings out in higher relief the liberty with which Christ has made us free.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE SAMARITANS

When a Jewish priest and Levite had passed by the man who had fallen among robbers between Jerusalem and Jericho, one alone showed mercy and he was a Samaritan. When ten lepers had been cured by Our Saviour, one alone was found to return and give thanks and he was a Samaritan. In answer to Christ's rebuke for their unbelief, the Jews answered with bitterness: "Do we not say well that thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil?" Thus the Samaritans appear and reappear here and there in the Gospel story, mostly praised by Christ, but detested by the Jews.

Who were these Samaritans?

A strange set of people, wedged in between Judæa proper and Galilee, right in the centre of Palestine and yet most sharply opposed to the Jews who surrounded them on every side, a thorn in the flesh of Judaism. Not only in the Holy Land, but in the bigger cities throughout the empire, in Alexandria and in Damascus and elsewhere, were Samaritans to be found. As eager recruits in the Roman armies they even used to harass and oppress Israel.

Notwithstanding, they were as punctilious as the strictest Jews in the observance of the Law of Moses, boasting that they were the only true Israel, more faithful to the laws of the fathers than the people of

Judæa or Galilee. Even the most fanatical Jews could not refuse them homage for their fidelity to the Law of the Most High. Jews might use the alleviations of the yoke of the law introduced by tradition and by the shrewd acuteness of Jewish rabbis; the Samaritans, as puritans and legalists, submitted to the unmitigated severity of the letter of the law and maintained an archaic form of Israelitic religion which in many ways was a reminder of ancient times.

How did they first arise?

The sect arose out of a marriage entanglement. Manasseh, the son of Joiada ben Eliashib, the high-priest, in the days of Nehemias, some four hundred and fifty years before Christ, had married a daughter of Sanballat the Horonite, the Persian Governor of Samaria. This mixed marriage of a true-blooded Jew of the high-priestly family with a woman, whose family might profess the Jewish faith, but who had foreign blood in her veins, was a scandal to Israel. Nehemias, the zealous governor of Judæa, drove him from Jerusalem in ignominy. We read in Neh. xiii., 29, the prayer of this otherwise sympathetic personage: "Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood and its covenant and that of the levites!"

If we combine the Scriptural account with that of Josephus, we gather that Manasseh went to his father-in-law at Samaria and that this astute politician used the opportunity to create there a rival priesthood and a rival worship to that of Jerusalem. The sect, then originated, has survived even to the present day, for the newest census of Palestine still registers one hundred and fifty-three Samaritans at the foot of the mountain, where their temple once stood.

Although the actual formation of the sect was due to matrimonial troubles in the time of Nehemias—for Manasseh was followed by those in aristocratic Jewish circles who had contracted similar mixed marriages—the real source of the aversion between Jews and Samaritans goes much further back in history.

The Twelve Tribes had hardly ever formed a political unity. After Solomon's death Israel parted from Juda, never to be reunited. Juda and Benjamin in the South, Ephrem and Manasseh, and the few other tribes that survived, in the North. The Northern kingdom stood for two hundred and fifty-three years. The Assyrians destroyed it in 721 B.C. The Southern kingdom stood one hundred and thirty-three years longer and was destroyed in 586 B.C. by king Nabuchodonosor.

The people of Juda and of Israel, though both worshippers of Jahveh, were often at war one with another and even in religion had begun to differ. Politics had demanded the rejection of Jerusalem as a religious centre by the people of the Northern kingdom. Rival sanctuaries had arisen at Bethel and Dan, the worship of Jahveh had been degraded by the use of such crude symbols as the calves at Bethel and Dan. But the pride of the Northern kingdom came to a sudden end.

After the King of Assyria had captured Samaria, he proudly engraved inscriptions thus worded: "I carried away captive 27,290 of its people. I took fifty chariots as an addition to my royal forces. I returned and settled there more people than formerly, drawn from lands I had captured. I appointed my officers over them as governors. I imposed on them tribute

and taxes after the Assyrian manner." It is true the Samaritans revolted again two years later, but we possess no inscriptional record of further deportations.

The deported were the leaders of the people, the aristocracy, and even the skilled workmen, such as smiths, lest they should forge new weapons of war. Even if we take the number 27,290 as indicating heads of families and then multiply it by six or eight, it is obvious that the bulk of the population must have remained.

The biblical statement that " . . . the King of Assyria carried Israel into Assyria and put them in Calah and in Habor by the river Gozan and in the cities of the Medes" must be understood in this restricted sense. The king of Assyria replaced the deported natives by colonists gathered from many different parts of his empire.

The first governor whom he appointed over the subjugated district was probably none other than king Ezechias of Judah. Such an appointment would be in keeping with the customary policy of Assyria and seems demanded by the exercise of authority over the district which the Bible attributed to Ezechias.

Sargon brought the first set of colonists soon after 721 B.C. Esarhaddon some forty years later sent others, as also did Assurbanipal a dozen years later. As these immigrants came in batches at different times, the first batch had time to be more or less absorbed by the native population before the second arrived, and the second before the third. Moreover, the immigrants were divided: they came from totally different and far-distant places with different customs

and rites. Their very variety was their weakness regarding the homogeneous and indigenous character of the Israelitic populations which remained.

At first there was indeed a strange amalgam of sects, described in the Book of Kings: "Every nationality (among the colonists) made gods of their own and put them in the shrines of the high places, which the Samaritans had made. The men of Babylon made Succoth-Cenoth and the men of Cuth made Nergal, the men of Hamath made Ashima, the Avites made Nibhar, and Tartak and the Sepharvites burnt their children in the fire of Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim."

This weird pantheon, however, proved very inefficient. The country, sorely devastated by continuous wars, was over-run by wild beasts. This plague was ascribed by the new-comers to their ignorance of "the manner of the God of the land." They applied to Assyria to send them some native priests, who were in exile, to instruct them in the rites and ceremonies of Jahveh. One or more of these priests settled in Bethel and taught them how they should fear Jahveh. For two or three generations a hybrid religion prevailed, till the old religion of Israel won the day and the Samaritans became as strict observers of the Mosaic Law as the Jews.

But antagonism to the Southern or real Jews remained. When Ezechias, king of Judah, made proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba even unto Dan, and bade all Israel come to Jerusalem to keep the Passover, "the posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephrem and Manasseh even to Zebulon, but they laughed them to scorn and mocked them." "Nevertheless divers of Asher and

Zebulon humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem." "A multitude of the people, even many of Ephrem and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulon (though they were not ritually clean), yet did eat the Passover, for Ezechias prayed for them, saying: The Lord pardon every one." Judah and Israel and the strangers that came from Israel or that dwelt in Juda rejoiced. "Since the time of Solomon there was not the like in Jerusalem." "When all this was finished, all Israel that were present went out of the cities of Judah and broke the images in pieces and cut down the groves and threw down the high places and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin in Ephrem also and Manasseh, until they had utterly destroyed them all."

These quotations give an insight into the true state of affairs. "Issachar and Zebulon" form the future Galilee, Ephrem the future "Samaria," Manasseh is partly on the west and partly on the east side of the Jordan. Many mocked, but some humbled themselves to Jerusalem. Zealous Israelites destroyed the high-places and thus vindicated the unique centre of Jewish worship in Jerusalem; even the high-places in Samaria were thus destroyed.

It was but a short-lived triumph. King Josias attempted the same again a hundred years later. His reformation with regard to Samaria was almost identical with that of Ezechias. He was, however, more ruthless than his predecessor: "he slew all the priests of the high-places that were upon the altars and burnt men's bones upon them and returned to Jerusalem." It seems presupposed throughout that the religion of "Samaria" is identical with that of Juda, for the abuse of high-places was the curse of Juda as well as

of Israel. Then comes the fall of Jerusalem and the Exile of the Southern Jews.

No sooner did the Jews return from Babylon and under Zerubabel begin to rebuild the Temple than the people of Samaria offered their services. "Let us build," so they said, "let us build with you, for we seek your God, as ye do, and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria, who brought us hither."

They thus claimed two hundred years of true worship of Jahveh. True, they characterize themselves as colonists, not as the native Israelitic population: during the two centuries they had not forgotten who it was who brought them thither. Obviously they were the aristocracy of Samaria, the well-to-do, who offered to help in building the temple. They were as proud to be the predominant class as the Norman nobles who came over with the Conqueror were proud to be such in England. The Governor of Samaria, Sanballat, who represented Persian authority, still had a name reminding all of his Assyrian origin. For all that, the bulk of the populace could have claimed that they had served Jahveh in one way or another for a thousand years.

The Jerusalem Jews, however, resolutely refused them any share in the rebuilding of the Temple. They did not give reasons. They simply said: You have nothing to do with us!

Our natural impulse is that of severe blame for the narrow-minded fanaticism of those who returned from exile, and of sympathy with the Samaritans. We are not bound to admire all that is done and said even by good and great people, whose record is in the Bible. Closer consideration, however, leads us to believe

that the Jews could have said much to excuse their apparently brutal intolerance. The offer of the Samaritans was not prompted by religion alone, but also by political expediency.

Their subsequent conduct shows this. When their help was refused, they obtained by lying and chicanery, a decree from the Persian court prohibiting the building of the temple, and all progress was prevented for at least two years. When some sixty years later, under Esdras and Nehemias, the Jews rebuilt Jerusalem, the Samaritans having failed to persuade the Persian authorities to interfere, tried by force to prevent the achievement of the work, and we have the graphic description of how, with trowel in the one hand and a sword in the other, the labourers after infinite toil and anxiety brought their work to a successful ending.

The Book of Nehemias also gives us to understand that many of the leading Jews were secretly in sympathy with the enemy, with whom they were on the most intimate footing owing to frequent intermarriages. Every ruse and trick was employed to terrify Nehemias into compliance, but he persevered undaunted and gained his object. Jerusalem rose from its ruins.

Esdras likewise succeeded—at least to a certain extent—in purifying the families from alien blood. Foreign wives and their children were sent away, although the Bible makes us realize that the unfortunate husbands struggled and strove to avert this cruel blow. More mortal offence than this could hardly have been given to the Samaritan community, and thenceforward an undying feud existed between the two sections of the Jewish race.

The breach was widened by the creation of a distinct hierarchy. Manasseh, the son of the Jewish high-priest, founded a priesthood in Samaria. Either at that time, or soon after, a rival temple was built on Mount Gerizim.

In order to understand this act of the Samaritan community we must remember that in the Law of Moses there is no mention whatever of Jerusalem as the centre of worship. The unity of a national sanctuary is indeed emphasized in the Book of Deuteronomy, but it is nowhere suggested that this sanctuary should be at Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was chosen for the first time by King David, and Solomon was the first to build a permanent temple and thus render permanent David's choice. There was a period of some thirty years from the completion of the Temple to the division of North and South and the parting of Israel from Judah. Only for thirty years, therefore, did all the tribes of Jacob acknowledge one sanctuary, and this choice was vigorously repudiated by Israel ever afterwards.

No doubt the very fact that the Ark of the Covenant and the Holy of Holies and the great brazen altar were at Jerusalem spoke for this city as the legitimate centre. But the northern tribes remembered that for many centuries the Ark had rested on their soil and not in the south. The Law of Moses speaks of "the place which the Lord shall choose," but it was difficult to persuade the Northerners that the Lord had really chosen Jerusalem. Moreover, Nabuchodonosor had destroyed the temple and razed it to the ground: the new temple of Zerubabel possessed neither Ark of the Covenant nor ancient altar of incense, nor brazen

altar for sacrifice. Its Holy of Holies was a mere empty shrine.

We are, of course, not concerned in excusing the Samaritans, but we want to understand them and see things with their eyes, however much we know that they were mistaken.

God had miraculously sanctioned the choice of Jerusalem as the place of national worship. He had given His promises to the house of David. Salvation, as Christ Himself attests to the Samaritans, is of the Jews. The Temple of Jerusalem had stood almost five hundred years and there the Ark had been. The Samaritans ought to have bowed before the obvious and the inevitable.

The community that returned from Babylon were the obvious successors of the legitimate bearers of the divine promise. Zerubabel was a prince of the House of David. The former shrines at Bethel and Dan were clearly schismatical places of worship. The better and calmer-minded of Israel knew it and had always more or less realized it. But in the anger of the moment, in the moment of wounded local patriotism, all this was forgotten and a sect was started which has persisted for some two thousand three hundred years. A miserable remnant, after untold adventures, persecutions and torments, still exists in the slums of Nablous this very day. These still go year by year to keep their Passover on the slopes of the mountain which they hold sacred.

Why should Mount Gerizim be sacred to them instead of Mount Zion?

This, I am afraid, was due to an after-thought. It was an invention arising from a misinterpretation and manipulation of the Scripture text.

We read in Deuteronomy xxvii. that Moses commanded that the Israelites after crossing the Jordan should set up great stones with the Law of God written on them. Moses meant, no doubt, such stones as the one on which the Law of Hammurabi is engraved and which is now in the Louvre in Paris. The stones should be set up on Mount Ebal, and there an altar should be built of whole stones, unchiselled, and sacrifices be offered, and there Israel should keep feasts. This command was actually carried out by Joshua, who divided the people, placing half of them on the slopes of Mount Gebal, half on the slopes of Gerizim; for these two twin mountains were divided by a narrow valley only. There the law was read solemnly to the whole assembly of Israel.

This command the Samaritans construed into a command to make this mountain the permanent sanctuary of Israel, and they changed the name Ebal into Gerizim. They actually inserted in the text the command to set up an altar at Gerizim. They took this from Deuteronomy and placed it immediately after the Ten Commandments.

There can be no doubt that this was a deliberate tampering with the text. Whether it preceded or followed the erection of the temple on Mount Gerizim we do not know.

By the find of Jewish papyri at Assouan in Egypt some thirty years ago a curious and vivid light was thrown on these times.

These ancient papyri of the fifth century before Christ contained an appeal of a Jewish community in Assouan, which had been resident there almost two hundred years, to the Jews in Palestine. The

Egyptian priests of Assouan had destroyed the Jewish temple of Jahveh there, and the injured Jews asked the help of the Governor of Judæa, a certain Bagohi, to obtain justice against their persecutors from the Persian authorities. They also wrote in the eighteenth year of Darius Nothus (408-407 B.C.) to Delaya and Shelemyah, sons of Sanballat, Governor of Samaria, to interest themselves in their cause.

The letter-writers do not betray any knowledge of religious troubles between Samaritans and Jews and presuppose them to be equally interested in the welfare of their co-religionists in Egypt. Moreover, they have a Jahveh temple of their own dating perhaps from the days of Jeremias the Prophet.

It may be urged, of course, that outside Palestine the precept of unity of sanctuary was not supposed to apply. In the second century before Christ the Jewish refugees of the Antiochian persecution had a temple at Leontopolis which stood for many centuries. The above letters throw a flood of light on the mentality of the Jews about 400 B.C. and the Jewish character even of the Samaritans.

However, the temple on Mount Gerizim roused the fiercest indignation in the Jews. In the year 132 B.C. it was totally destroyed by the Maccabean leader and high priest, John Hyrcanus. Twenty-three years later he besieged Samaria for a whole twelvemonth, stormed it and completely destroyed it. The inhabitants he carried away as slaves. Forty years later the Romans rebuilt it under the name of Sebaste.

Whether the temple of Mount Gerizim was ever rebuilt cannot be said for certain. There was certainly no Samaritan temple in the days of Christ.

There probably was another temple on the very same site, of which we have representations on coins of Antoninus Pius; but it was a pagan, not a Samaritan temple.

Theologically the Samaritans differed but little from the Jews.

The most remarkable thing is their acceptance of the Five Books of Moses to the exclusion of all other books of the Old Testament.

When did the Samaritans first take over the Pentateuch from the Jews?

Their Pentateuch, though written in archaic Phœnician characters, is to all intents and purposes identical with the Jewish one. The text, though closely allied to that translated later by the Seventy at Alexandria, is by no means the same in character, it rather represents a form of development anterior to both Massora and Septuagint.

Naturally mere differences of spelling are not taken into account. The Samaritans did not pronounce or hardly pronounced their gutturals; to put it colloquially, they dropped their h's. This in a Semitic language otherwise so full of gutturals causes confusion in spelling, but is of no further importance.

The Samaritans, like the Jews, had long ceased to speak Hebrew and used a Hebraised Aramaic dialect instead; hence they had to translate the Books of Moses into the vulgar tongue. A popular translation of this kind is called a Targum. Now the Samaritan Targum shows archaic features which make it seem older than the Jewish one. It is certainly more literal and closer to the original.

But when did the Samaritans first accept the original?

Those who are in modern days bound hand and foot to the theory of the late compilation of the Books of Moses in the days of Esdras—a thousand years almost after Moses led Israel out of Egypt—are forced to say that the Samaritans received it first from Esdras or from Manasseh, the apostate Jewish priest, or perhaps later. We, who are not hampered by modern dogmatism about the late origin of the Pentateuch, are freer in this matter.

It seems extremely unlikely that the Samaritans should have adopted as sacred a book which had been recently compiled by their most deadly foes, most unlikely that they should have accepted a book containing provisions and laws about the marriage of priests which must have sounded extremely awkward to them; most unlikely that in a text, supposed to be so recently compiled by those whose authority they rejected, the Samaritans should have only dared to introduce the trifling variations in their favour which occur. Evidently the text to them was something sacrosanct and admittedly divine.

Moreover, the Samaritans accepted only the Books of Moses and none others whatever. If they accepted them from Esdras, why did they not accept also Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and at least part of Kings? These books are full of incidents praising Northern Israel: in fact early Israelitic history centred more in the North than in the South. Joshua was the great hero of the Ten Tribes. The Samaritans were proud of telling Zerubabel that they had served Jahveh for two hundred years, even as the Jews did.

Would they, some two generations later, have adopted a law-book and conformed their worship to it with anxious punctiliousness, and not only their

worship but their whole national life—to a law-book compiled by their rivals and enemies? It seems incredible.

Much more likely that, when they learnt "the manner of the God of the land" in the days of their first immigration after the fall of Samaria in 721 B.C., they should also have learnt of the books of Moses, the founder and lawgiver of Israel.

Such a fact would be the death-blow of the Welhausen theory of the late compilation of the Pentateuch or Hexateuch. Be it so. Catholics can reserve their freedom of judgment even with regard to this modern dogma.

# CHAPTER IX

## THE STORY OF THE PUBLICANS

When Christ was a boy all Palestine was thrown into a ferment at the introduction of Roman taxation amongst the Jews. Cyrinus, the Governor of Syria, was holding his second census and assessment of property in his province, which included Judæa, and Coponius, the Governor of Judæa, tried to carry out the taxation based on this census. The Jews at first took the news of this taxation very badly, but were persuaded by the high-priest to give an account of their estates without further trouble. Judas of Galilee, however, opposed the taxation by force of arms. He perished in the revolt and his adherents were scattered, but his three sons survived to be a thorn in the side of the Roman administration for many years.

Some ten years later, when Christ was about twenty years old, both Syrians and Jews made a determined effort at Rome to obtain some reduction of their rates and taxes. They failed and remained the heavily-taxed people they had been for many years.

During the reign of Herod the Great, the Romans respected the autonomy of his large kingdom, and fiscal arrangements were under his immediate supervision, though he was tributary to Rome; but the small principalities inherited by his sons had no claim to such regards. The Roman tax-collectors were therefore probably as prominent in Galilee as in

Judæa proper, though no doubt the small petty states of Antipas and Philip had some local taxation of their own.

The taxes in the provinces were direct and indirect. The *direct* taxes were, first a general income tax, or annual poll-tax of one per cent. of total property. This the Jews seem to have designated by the Greek loanword *demosia*. It was payable by every man or woman up to the age of sixty-five; men were liable from the fourteenth, women from their twelfth year. Even slaves came under this tax. Then there was a land tax, or homestead tax, which the Jews seem to have designated by the loanward *kenes*, which is only the Latin word, *census*, hebraised. A third tax was the *arnona*, from the Latin *annona*, which consisted of a tax on grain and on cattle for the provisioning of the Roman army. In addition to this there was *angaria*, or occasional forced labour on public works. There was also a tax on professions or occupations, the bakers, the butchers, the tanners, as a corporation, had to find some definite sum, and this went by the name of *crusargurion*. Finally there was the capitation tax of two drachmas per person, the so-called *golgoleth*, which was originally a religious tax for the Temple, but later for Jupiter Capitolinus.

Then there were *indirect* taxes and dues : port dues, road dues, market dues, and frontier dues. The veritable maze of petty states which covered Syria and Palestine in the first century must have made the last taxes particularly obnoxious. The tax-gatherers' booths at Jericho and Capharnahum were probably specially connected with these.

What must have embittered the natives still more was that Roman citizens paid no local dues in any of

the towns and districts which had an autonomous government. St. Paul at least had the privilege of not having his pockets searched when he went from Tarsus to Jerusalem, or when later, on his missionary journeys, he entered Iconium, Derbe or Lystra. Happily Christ and His Apostles were poor men, but they cannot have completely escaped the chicanery of publicans.

A number of articles were specially taxed, such as jewellery. Peter and Andrew and James must have paid a special tax on their fishing craft, for there was a tax on boats. Moreover, the direct taxes were partially paid in money, partially in kind, and thus became a sort of indirect tax. Thus one-third had to be paid on fruit trees, and so on.

There can be no doubt that the provinces, and especially Judæa, were very heavily taxed. What must have galled the Jews most was a tax on every sale. The rebellion of 70 A.D. was largely due to exasperation under excessive taxation, the ever-increasing burden of which even King Agrippa could not relieve.

How were these taxes collected? From the day that Pompey first interfered in Palestinian affairs, B.C. 63, to the reduction of Judæa to a Roman Province soon after Our Lord was born, Palestine had paid in extraordinary levies—more or less as bakshish to Roman Generals to deal gently with her—400 talents to Scaurus, 500 talents to Pompey, 200 pounds of gold to Flaccus, 10,000 talents to Crassus, 700 talents to Cassius, 400 talents to Sabinus, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer to Augustus. The ordinary taxes amounted to the half-yearly sum of 600 talents.

After Archelaus' death, about the time when St. Joseph with Jesus and Mary returned to Palestine, the country came under the direct fiscal control of Rome

Now, Augustus was at the time trying gradually to change the method of collecting taxes bequeathed to him by the Republic. This method had given rise to shameful oppression. All taxes were farmed out to the highest bidder. Mighty financiers or great trusts bought the right to collect the taxes in a certain district for a lump sum down. Every five years the collecting of taxes was sold to the highest bidder. This led to crying abuses. True, the proconsuls had the right of supervision, but these proconsuls were only appointed for a year, and the great banking trusts which collected the taxes were far too influential to mind an official who so quickly came and went. They had a vast army of agents to extort the money from the people, who had practically no means of redress.

Augustus tried to stem the tide of corruption. All new taxes, such as five per cent. on wills, and others, were collected directly by imperial authority, and gradually the Emperors succeeded in ousting the great banking trusts, and in nationalizing the collection of taxes, but it took them four generations to do so.

The *direct* taxes in Our Lord's day were collected in the provinces by a State official called the Quæstor, but in small districts such as Palestine the Roman Governor himself acted as Quæstor. The *indirect* taxes were farmed out still. Such taxes, as the monopoly on salt from the Dead Sea, must have required a great financial magnate to manage it, as it was a big source of revenue. Sir William Ramsay

thought that in Palestine the farming out of indirect taxes ceased before it ceased elsewhere, and that at the beginning of our era, but this view is not accepted by others.

In any case, in Palestine the taxes were actually gathered by natives, by Jews from Jews themselves. These minor "publicans" were in charge of one definite tax, in one definite district each. They did not pay down a lump sum to purchase the right to collect, but they seem to have received a percentage on the takings. In one point they were markedly less powerful than the agents of the fiscal trusts under the Republic: they could not force the payment of arrears. They could only denounce defaulters to the Government, which then interfered with its own police, to ensure payment. None the less the system was very oppressive. We know what annoyance over-strict or bullying customs or excise officers can be in our own days, though they receive no benefit from the money collected; what must it have been when the officials financially profited by the amount they took?

There seems to have been an immense number of publicans, having their booths in every town and village; in fact they must have been a ubiquitous feature of civil life. They were most heartily detested and abhorred by the people. They were Jews, who had lent themselves to help the Romans in oppressing their fellow-countrymen and fellow-religionists. They ranked with pagans, public sinners and harlots.

The Mishna shows again and again its loathing for the *mochesim,* as they were called in hebrew. There are three classes of men with whom faith need not be

kept: murderers, thieves and publicans, says the treatise Nedarim. No gift of a publican might be put in the treasury of the temple or in the synagogue alms-boxes, nor should money ever be changed with them, for their money was tainted money, says the treatise Baba Kamma. No publican could sit in the Sanhedrin or in any court of justice; they could not even be accepted as witnesses. The exclusion from the witness-box applied even to the members of their family, for where in a house one was a publican, all were publicans, so says the treatise Sanhedrin. On a Sabbath day one was not allowed to write a publican's receipt or even carry the inkpot for the purpose.

In fact they were the outcasts of society, no decent man would be seen in their company. In consequence they developed all the characteristics of pariahs. To lessen their isolation they associated with the disreputable classes of society. Not that they were themselves always poor, in fact they seem to have been able sometimes to amass great fortunes even in Palestine.

All, from the richest to the humblest, dreaded the coming of the tax-collector, who not only required money, but might distrain a great part of the produce of the soil and of the very fruit on the trees. Even poor St. Joseph must have had many a visit of a publican; no doubt he paid as a member of the carpenter's profession, and for any plot of land he might have worked, when not in his carpenter's shop.

How much money could be made by the profession of a publican is shown by the offer of eight talents to the Governor Gessius Florus by John the Publican in the days of the Apostles.

What did Our Lord think of the publicans? At first sight it seems that He endorsed the common estimate of them. "If a man will not hear the Church, let him be to you as a heathen and a publican!" "If you love them that love you what reward will ye have? Do not even publicans do the same?" "Amen I say to you, publicans and harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you, for John came unto you in the way of righteousness and ye believed him not, but the publicans and the harlots believed in him." "All the people that heard [John], even publicans, proclaimed God's righteousness."

That even publicans were brought to repentance by John was evidently in Our Lord's eyes a token of the Baptist's extraordinary and superhuman persuasiveness. When St. Luke describes the preaching of John, he first refers to the bulk of the people, then to the publicans, and finally to the soldiers, as the most unlikely people ever to take to piety.

The Baptist, however, had not condemned their profession outright and as such. When the publicans asked: "Master, what shall we do?" he did not answer: give up your profession, for it in itself is wrong, but merely: give up extortion, do nothing more than is appointed to you, enforce the tariff but do no more. I daresay even this was an heroic ordinance for some of them.

It must be granted, then, that publicans were sinners, but Christ came to save sinners, not to denounce them. The Pharisees had said of the Baptist that he was possessed of a devil, of Our Lord they said: "He is a glutton and a wine bibber and a friend of publicans and sinners!"

There is a Greek proverb: "A tax-collector means a thief," but to the Jew he was even more; a renegade, an apostate, a man who, for filthy lucre's sake, became a tool of the oppressor; a man who made money out of the agony of his nation, a man who embodied in himself the practical application of alien law to Israel. The Governor or his soldiers were not always and everywhere in evidence, but in market-place and at bridges and cross-roads sat the publican; he came prying into their domestic affairs and robbed them of their hard-gained livelihood for the benefit of idolatrous Rome!

It was an act of startling defiance of popular prejudice that Our Lord chose a publican for one of His twelve Apostles, and called him direct from the receipt of custom: "Follow Me!" The priests and the scribes must have gasped at the audacity of the act and at Our Lord's deliberate acceptance of the invitation to the great banquet with which St. Matthew celebrated his vocation to the apostolate. We may be certain that in their eyes "no decent man" would go to this festivity, for there were many sinners and publicans there.

One wonders how the other apostles regarded it. It is not unlikely that, as several apostles had been disciples of St. John the Baptist, they had already learnt to associate with publican-converts, and St. Matthew may well have been already a convert to repentance and righteousness through baptism in the Jordan before Our Lord called him to His own intimate circle. As a matter of fact Christ had already distinctly expressed His attitude towards the payment of taxes to Rome. "Give to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's and to God the things that are God's,"

He had said to those who showed Him the coin of the tribute.

Christ's attitude towards the payment of taxes receives a curious illustration from the incident when St. Peter was challenged whether his Master paid the tax, not indeed to Rome, but to the Temple at Jerusalem. This tax was a double drachma per person, or about eighteen pence of our money, which, however, would be about thirty shillings or two pounds in present purchasing value. The collectors of this tax must have met Peter at the gate of Capharnahum with the question: Does your Master not pay the didrachmas?

This tax stood, of course, in different category from the others, it had a quasi-sacred character, and it was a matter of religious obligation for the correct Jew to pay it. It was regarded as indicated in the Bible. The Book of Exodus xxx., 13, tells of the payment by all the sons of Israel of half a shekel for the sanctuary when they were in the desert. In the days of Nehemias, some five hundred years almost before Our Lord, an annual tax of a third of a shekel was imposed, and this was raised to half a shekel in later centuries.

Hence St. Peter answered the collector at once: "Certainly," and he went immediately to find his Master, who forestalls his question, and then miraculously provides the money for Himself and His principal disciple. Our Lord evidently did not have this considerable sum at hand, but decides to pay lest scandal be given to the people.

It is curious to note that the story occurs only in the Gospel of St. Matthew, the former publican, who would take a professional interest in the matter. The

way it is told is one of those minute but telling indications that St. Matthew wrote before the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, for then the *Roman* authorities continued to collect this tax for the Roman Capitol. St. Luke omits the story, because he has heathen readers in view, who would not understand what "the didrachmas" were meant for. St. Mark, being St. Peter's Gospel, would not tell what tended to the glorification of the author. St. Matthew had no need to explain what every Jew before 70 A.D. understood.

A Jew also, rather than a Greek or a Roman, would understand Our Lord's dialogue with St. Peter. "The kings of the earth from whom do they take taxes and tribute, from their own sons or from other people?" Peter answered. "From other people." Christ continues: "Sons then are free, but, lest we scandalize them, go to sea and cast an hook and take the fish that first comes up, and when thou hast opened its mouth, thou shalt find a stater (exactly two didrachmas) and give it to them for Me and thee."

In the East taxes were regarded as a personal payment to the Eastern monarch and his family, whose private property the country was supposed to be; but democratic Greeks and Romans thought otherwise. A Jew would see the force of the argument. If Jesus was the Son of the Lord of all, and Simon Peter His apostle, it was no duty of theirs to pay the Temple tax. However, people might not understand, hence they paid.

The call of St. Matthew explains the great desire of Zachaeus to see Our Lord on His passing through Jericho. Zachaeus was a chief-publican, says the

New Testament, a title which occurs in the Talmud as *Rosh hammochesim*. He probably was a sub-magister, or local manager, as we would say, of a society or joint-stock company of taxfarmers, having its seat at Rome. Jericho being an important centre of the balsam trade, they may have kept a special local agent there.

Though Zachaeus must have been a man of some substance, the crowd would have shown scant courtesy to this detested excise man, and elbowed him roughly to the back. As he was a man of short stature he had not much chance of seeing anything. So he climbed a tree, not a very dignified thing for a wealthy man to do, but the low branches of a sycamore by the wayside made it less grotesque, and, I daresay, during the tumult of the passing-by of the Prophet, people were too busy to pay much attention to him. Christ looks up and says: "Zachaeus: I intend staying in your house to-day!"

The crowd were certainly taken aback, not merely the Scribes and Pharisees this time, but everybody. It seemed almost an insult to the town, a town famous as a town of priests! Christ might have chosen at least the house of some respectable citizen, a man of known virtue and piety, but He deliberately chose the house of a man of this detestable caste. When Christ and the surrounding multitude finally stop at Zachaeus' house and they see Christ go in, the crowd breaks out in loud murmurs: "He has gone into the house of that sinner to stay with him!"

But Zachaeus, rich though he was, and accustomed to receive poor people sitting and to welcome them with a condescending nod, stood there before the

Carpenter's Son as a servant waiting on his Master, and said: "Lord, I am going to give the half of my goods to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything I'll return it to him fourfold." He meant: "Whatever my past has been, to-day I start afresh and become your disciple."

Some time before a rich young man was told by Our Lord: "If thou wilt be perfect, sell whatever thou hast, give it to the poor, and follow Me." Such heroic renunciation Zachaeus did not forthwith feel able to make. His was a noble resolution none the less. There was no doubt a great deal to be atoned for. He realized that charity covereth a multitude of sins and that almsdeeds were the best reparation.

"If I have defrauded anyone." The Greek is very characteristic: "If I have falsely denounced anyone" as a defaulter or in arrears with his taxes. This, no doubt was Zachaeus' biggest sin. Zachaeus forestalls the law, which seems to have punished false denunciations with four times the amount of the original charge.

Note that Zachaeus does not promise to give up his profession, but Christ none the less answers: "To-day salvation has come to this house, for he too is a son of Abraham, and the Son of Man came to save what was lost." St. Matthew's vocation then was not for Zachaeus, but he intended to be like the father of the rabbi praised in the treatise *Sanhedrin,* who had been a publican for thirteen years, but lessened rather than increased the burden of Israel.

"He too is a son of Abraham." Christ then protests against the practical excommunication of this despised caste from the commonwealth of the children of God.

Throughout the ages this protest has been eternalized in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, who went up to the temple to pray, and the latter went out justified rather than the first. We have heard the parable from childhood, but, as our hypocrites and public sinners bear other names and show their hypocrisy or repentance in different ways, the parable is not so vivid to us as to the contemporaries of Jesus. Every one in those days would instantaneously picture to himself some individual Pharisee of his acquaintance strutting up the Temple and standing there mouthing out his solemn sentences; and everyone knew some unfortunate publican, ostracized by all his neighbours, a member of "a family on whom nobody would call," a person only mentioned with criminals and prostitutes.

Everybody makes or mars his own soul. It is not the set or class of people to whom we belong which irrevocably settles our character or future for ever. Such is the contribution of the Gospel to the story of the Publicans.

# CHAPTER X

## THE COIN OF THE TRIBUTE

BOTH the parables and the miracles of Our Blessed Lord have been made the subject of numerous and detailed studies by eminent scholars, but we are not aware of any formal study of the series of encounters between Our Lord and His adversaries which are reported in the Gospels. Yet these encounters are marvellously apt to bring out the dignity, the patience, together with the swiftness in rejoinder and the greatness of mind, of Our Divine Saviour. They also portray for us most vividly the thoughts and desires of those that opposed Him and the ideas current in their surroundings.

The question of the payment of tribute, as recorded in the Gospels, is perhaps the most elaborate attempt of entangling Our Lord in His speech. It occurred towards the end of Christ's ministry when His enemies were exasperated by His popularity and success, and had determined to take active measures to break the influence of the Galilean Prophet, if necessary, by force. Christ's death was, as it were, in sight.

He had spoken to them the parable of the vine-dressers slaying the Heir. No one could misunderstand the bearing of this parable. The "beloved only Son" whom the wicked husbandmen slew, was obviously Christ Himself. His death meant that the Jews were rejecting their Messias. Then Christ fore-

told that the stone which the builders rejected was to be the cornerstone which the divine Architect of the Universe was using in building up the world's history. And Christ had applied the terrible words of Isaias the Prophet: "Every one who falleth on that stone shall be broken, and on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to dust."

Not one of the crowd to whom Our Lord spoke but must have grasped the full meaning of this fearsome threat. The chief priests and the scribes and the elders of the people had come with pompous solemnity to question this Man of Nazareth. He had openly put them to shame, He had defied them. He had read the murderous intentions in their innermost hearts, He had dared to threaten them, He would fall upon them as a block of stone and grind them to dust!

They would have laid hands on Him there and then, say the Gospels, and yet they withheld. They did not dare. They feared the people. Time was not ripe yet for the direct employment of force. With minds sore and exasperated they left Him. But they only left Him to meet together somewhere and hold counsel. At last they thought out a scheme, which would bring about the fall of the Man they hated, a scheme which would either discredit Him in the eyes of the people, or embriol Him with the Roman authorities.

They would ask Him this question of the tribute. In case He should say right out, as they expected, that the payment of the tribute was unlawful, their course was clear: they would forthwith hand Him over to the Governor, says St. Luke. The matter, however, was not easy. Personally they could not

go back to put this question to Him. Christ, so they must have thought, was sure to refuse to answer, as He had done before; or even put to them another question which would embarrass them. Besides, it was against their dignity. They, chief-priests, scribes and elders, had received a rebuff, and even been threatened in public. They could not demean themselves by returning with another question. Other people had to ask it and put the alternative before Him. They had to do it in such a way as not to rouse His suspicion. It had to appear to be a bona-fide religious scruple.

In order to succeed they had invoked the aid of another set of men: they had combined with the Herodians, as they had done immediately after their defeat in the synagogue at Capharnahum, where Christ had healed the man with the withered hand.

As neither Pharisees nor Herodians could very well go themselves, they sent their disciples, and so the deputation consisted of younger men. It would look like a party of students, who had left the lecture-room, and who now came to this new and already famous rabbi to ask him his decision and to abide by it.

They had rehearsed their parts well, for they began with a most courteous and flattering introduction. They said: they knew Jesus to be a man, who spoke the truth; a man who was perfectly fearless in anything He said; a man who did not know what human respect meant; in fact a man who was teaching a way of life which was truly divine. Considering that they could not say that Jesus had passed brilliantly through His course of rabbinical studies, or that His decisions were law in the schools, they could at least praise His

frankness and sincerity; this would induce Him to be free and open.

After this well-thought-out speech, which would have satisfied the vanity of any rabbi, they pose their question: Is it lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar, or shall we not give it? Tell us, what dost thou think? They seem to hang on His words, let Him but say the word: if He forbids it, well—they will refuse it, however disagreeable the consequences; if He allows it, they will silence their scruples and pay.

They had put a question which possessed "actuality" in Our Lord's day, and especially in Galilee.

Judas of Galilee has raised the cry, at the time of Cyrinus' taxation, that to pay tribute to the Romans involved the recognition of mere men as masters over Israel, by the side of God, Israel's only Master and King. The payment of tribute was an act of apostasy from Israel's God. The Romans had crushed the revolt, but the discontent was seething below the surface and Judas' sons were to be the leaders in the next rebellion. Though the Pharisees paid, they only bowed before necessity. They grudgingly yielded to physical force, but did so with troubled consciences, or at least said that they did so.

The Herodian family, however, was most friendly to the Romans. In their eyes passive resistance to "Rome on the rates" was suicidal folly. Herod's dynasty was frankly a vassalage under Rome, and it was only right and proper that they should pay tribute to their overlord. The Herodians as a religio-political party, are nowhere mentioned outside the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark, but it is not difficult to guess their characteristics. The legality of

the payment of tribute must have been the very bone of contention between themselves and the stricter Pharisees. Such things were hotly debated in Rabbinic schools. How lively these discussions could be, we learn from the troubles between the followers of Hillel and Shammai.

What would seem more natural than that a party of eager students, young men full of ideals, the hope of Israel, should come to the new Teacher from Nazareth with such a burning question? If we might use a modern term to describe a Gospel scene, we would say they were a clever set of *agents provocateurs:* "hypokatethous," St. Luke calls them, which is not well translated in our version by "spies"; secret agents would come nearer to the Greek term. The real actors are behind the scene.

Christ sees through it all at a glance, and says sternly: "Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Bring me a coin of the tribute that I may look at it." And they fetched Him a coin.

The ordinary coins—certainly the copper ones—had no image of Cæsar on them, but palms, lilies, grapes, censers or a royal parasol were stamped upon them. The Romans, knowing the religious objection of the Jews against graven images, had made this concession to what they considered national prejudice. The coin of the tribute, or the capitation tax, was a silver coin, stamped for this purpose, and had the effigy of the Emperor on one side and his style and title on the other: "Tiberius, son of the divine Augustus, Emperor," or some similar reading.

Strict Jews no doubt refused to carry coins with an effigy in their pockets; in any case this party, which came to interview Jesus, had none with them. The

Gospel says: "They fetched Him one," possibly from money-changers close by. This unexpected request for this coin "to look at it," must have roused the surprise and the expectation of the questioners, and was probably the cause of other people gathering round. It must have taken at least a few minutes to get this coin.

Meanwhile, they could inwardly speculate about the coming reply. Poor people in those days did not often handle silver coins with the Emperor's image on them, but surely the Carpenter's Son must have seen such coins at least sometimes. In fact, it must have been paid by Him or for Him ever since He reached the age of fourteen. Did Joseph and He really escape payment all these years? What was this pretence that He had never seen the coin? Was it to show His contempt for the Romans and all that concerned them? How could the coin help Him in answering their question?

The money was brought and handed to Christ. He looked at it intently, turned it over, no doubt, and then said: "Whose image and superscription is this?"

The Greek or Latin words stamped on the coin, being in a foreign tongue, might easily be unintelligible to a working man of Galilee, but surely the matter was obvious, hence they answer curtly: "Cæsar's." "Give, therefore, to Cæsar what is Cæsar's and to God what is God's." We may be certain that, in saying so, He handed the coin back to them, and that He said it in a way which conveyed the assurance that *that* question was answered and done with. And with the crowd standing around, these interviewers could not think of anything more

to say. They could not find anything to lay hold of in His answer, says St. Luke, and, disconcerted, they kept silence. St. Mark has a graphic expression, of which the homely translation would be: "they gaped at Him in amazement."

It had been so short and simple. As Cæsar stamped this coin with his own name and portrait, in some sense at least it belonged to him; it is only proper that you should give it him back; this will not prevent your giving yourselves to God, made as you are after His image and likeness. There is in Christ's answer an ease and simplicity, coupled with a stern definiteness, which made any quibbling impossible. At the same time a general principle of vast import was given, which is applicable through all ages.

The questioners had a scruple, or pretended to have it, about paying taxes to the *de facto* government. As a matter of fact the whole difficulty was theoretical. The Jews in practice had paid it for many years, and all rabbis of note had advised them to do so. Rabbi Akiba, a hundred years later, was the first rabbi to teach explicitly the contrary None the less they confidently awaited a negative answer from Christ.

It seemed absurd to them that a claimant to the Messiahship, one who claimed to be Himself the divinely-appointed King of Israel and the royal Son of David, should tell His people to pay poll-tax to the great Roman oppressor. Should He, contrary to their expectations, declare the payment of the tribute lawful, it would be tantamount to abandoning His Messiahship. It would discredit Him with the people, who had already once attempted to make Him King. It would show the people that His courage had failed at the last moment when He had to face ultimate

issues. But if He refused to pay the tax, Roman officials stood ready to deal with Jesus of Nazareth as they had dealt with Judas of Galilee. They thought they held Christ in the meshes of an iron net; Christ proved it to be a spider's web.

The wisdom of His divine saying has cast light for ever on the relation between Church and State. The distinction between the spheres of these two powers may be a commonplace to us now, but this knowledge is the gift of Christianity. To Jew and Gentile alike it was unknown two thousand years ago. Greeks and Romans deified the state and could not realize the existence of a spiritual, religious power over against the secular state and independent thereof. The source of all power was one, the existence of two authorities inconceivable to them. The Jew likewise erred, though the creation of a Davidic kingship, distinct from the Aaronic priesthood, might have taught him better. All had still to learn that it was possible to give Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and God the things that are God's.

The coin of the tribute throughout the course of the ages has become the symbol of the truth that the supremacy of God is the best defence of the just rights of man.

# CHAPTER XI

## THE MEN WHO PLOTTED CHRIST'S DEATH

Most men who have given some thought to New Testament history have faced the problem why Jesus was rejected by His own people after so short a public life and so many miracles of love and beneficence. The question is a difficult and an intricate one. One thing, however, seems certain: it was not so much the people as their official leaders who were actively guilty of this rejection.

The multitude admired Jesus, and followed Him, and, above all, the people of Galilee. The multitude was fickle and wayward, but they were simple and straightforward; they were enthusiastic for the new teacher from Nazareth, so much so that it could be said by the foes of Jesus: "all the world goes after Him!" True, the multitude was passive at His crucifixion; but it is plain that they were taken by surprise at the great catastrophe, and that even the crowd before the house of Pilate had to be cajoled by the priests to agree with their request for Barabbas. If, after Christ's resurrection, the bulk of the Jewish people did not accept the new religion, this was due to the pressure exercised by their leaders, against which only heroic faith could persevere. None the less, even in Jerusalem many thousands remained true to Jesus.

Let us examine the forces which were at work to encompass the downfall of the Prophet of Nazareth. Again and again these three categories are enumerated as opposing Our Lord: the high-priests, the elders of the people, and the Scribes.

Caiaphas himself has clearly indicated the reason why the high-priests were the enemies of Christ. We read in St. John: "The chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said: What shall we do? for this man doeth many signs. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe in him: and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." Whereupon Caiaphas said: "Ye know nothing at all, nor do ye take account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people that the whole nation perish not." The motive of the high-priests, therefore, is plain enough: expediency. They were no fanatics, they were Sadducees, and their Jewish faith was reduced to a minimum. What the Galilean prophet said or did was in itself probably a matter of supreme indifference to them, but they thought of the consequences.

The people acclaimed Him as the Messias. He Himself tried to restrain the ardour of His followers, who wanted to crown Him king, but the excitement of the multitude grew continually more intense. It was dangerous. Their national aspirations might rouse the Romans to measures of severe repression. The high-priests were quite contented as they were. They hated any political disturbance, which might deprive them of their place and station. They were a wealthy and privileged class; they fared well under the Romans; they wanted no change. A change could only be for the worse as far as they were

concerned. A claimant for the Messiahship was supremely inconvenient under the circumstances.

They were bewildered by the situation. Caiaphas said: "Ye know nothing at all," which we might render in homely language: "You people have no common sense"; "it is only common sense," says Caiaphas, "that the Man of Nazareth must go; sacrifice one man to prevent a national upheaval, which might sweep us all away. Scruples are foolish, our supreme self-interest must dictate our policy." And thus they decided on His death. Note they were the high-priests; the simple priests and lower clergy had but little to do with it.

Another section of Christ's foes were "the elders of the people," or prominent laity, without any official status beside that of membership of the Sanhedrin.

They were not unanimous. St. John tells us: "even of the rulers many believed in Jesus, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess it lest they should be put out of the synagogue, for they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God." Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus dared even after Jesus' death to declare their sympathy for Him. Many of these elders, however, must have looked askance at the carpenter's Son, who posed as a reformer, who moved among the poor and the lowly, who denounced riches as dangerous to eternal salvation, and had a special blessing for the poor in spirit.

The main reason which ruled these elders was the fear lest they should be put out of the synagogue: and here we touch the chief point of the power of the Scribes, who appear foremost in the opposition to Christ. The Synagogue was the centre, not only of

religious, but of social life in Palestine. To be excluded from the Synagogue meant to become a pariah, a man degraded and without social status. Even the wealthiest citizen dreaded it. According to St. John the parents of the man born blind, whom Our Lord cured, did not even dare to assert the evident miracle worked on their son for fear of being cast out of the synagogue.

The predominant power in the Synagogue was in the hands of the Scribes; the Scribes were the driving force behind the opposition to Christ.

Why were the Scribes Christ's sworn enemies?

The first reason no doubt was this. The Scribes formed a more or less closed corporation, a professional class. Many Scribes exercised some handicraft and did not exclusively depend on the Scribal profession, but that they formed a class by themselves is evident. We possess no details as to how one became a disciple or scholar of a master in the Law; but that some such arrangement existed is without doubt. They were a most conservative body, jealous of the influence they wielded, which was enormous. They insisted above all things on tradition, a handing down from legitimate teachers. Everything depended on the chain of tradition not being broken. They formed apparently a small coterie of lawyer-schoolmaster-students, desperately anxious to remain a select body of experts claiming absolute submission from the ignorant herd.

Now, the Man from Nazareth did not belong to their set. That was His first great crime. There is a scene depicted in St. Luke xx. which gives us an insight into their mentality: "One day when he was teaching the people in the temple, there came upon

him the chief priests and the Scribes with the elders and said to him: Tell us, by what authority doest thou these things? or who is it that gave thee this authority? And he answered and said to them: I also will ask you a question; and tell me: The baptism of John, was it from heaven or from men? And they reasoned with themselves: If we shall say, from heaven, he will say: Why did ye not believe him? But if we shall say, from men; all the people will stone us: for they are persuaded that John was a prophet. And they answered, that they knew not whence it was. And Jesus said to them: Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things."

The divine mission of the Baptist was accepted with such intense conviction by the people that they would kill anyone who overtly denied it, yet the Scribes had not accepted it. Why? Because John was not a Scribe, he had not graduated in their schools, to use a modern phrase. He was an outsider, an intruder, what right had he to teach? We read that Sadducees and Pharisees, priests and levites, came to the baptism of John, but not Scribes; for what could they, the learned, the scholarly, the wise, learn from a man, who without training and without study, preached vulgar penance? Herod had happily relieved the Scribes of an unpleasant duty, otherwise John might have died at Jerusalem at the hands of his own countrymen.

Now this Jesus had arisen, a man without education, for no one knew where He had learnt His letters, and He drew vast crowds after Him! The Scribes loved to be called "Rabbi," to be invited to banquets and sit in the first places; they went about with extra

large fringes to their upper garments; they expected salutations in the marketplace, and now the common people, the Am Haarez as they were disdainfully called, deserted them and followed a Galilean upstart! Nay, more, they deliberately made comparisons between the Galilean and the Scribes to the latter's disadvantage: "This man speaketh not as the Scribes and Pharisees, but as one having authority!" No debates and discussions about the meaning of texts with fellow scholars for Him! He settled all by His own authority, it was always: "I say unto you." No anxious sifting of conflicting traditions for Him, but always words of power! The entire Scribal profession resented this outrage on their old-established rights and were aflame with the fury of jealousy.

Pilate, as a shrewd man of the world, saw through it all and knew that they had delivered Jesus out of envy, as the Gospel tells.

This professional jealousy tried to find justification in the fact that Jesus seemed to attack the very Law itself and no doubt many Scribes persuaded themselves that they were moved by holy, righteous indignation. But Jesus laid His finger on the sore point saying: "Woe to you Scribes, for you have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves and ye hindered them that were entering in." Yes, they had taken away the key of knowledge, taken it away from the simple folk, from the common people, claiming that it was their exclusive privilege to understand and interpret the Word of God; amateurs were utterly debarred, the Scribes, only were supposed to know, and they doled out their knowledge as they would. The kingdom which

Christ founded they would not enter and hindered others from so doing.

The Prophet of Nazareth had made the Scribal profession cheap, for if He was right, then their occupation was gone. He laid no stress on the minutiæ of the Law. He spoke of mercy, humility, chastity, love of God; things perfectly obvious, things that needed no lawyer's mind to search out or to grasp, and He set aside as of no weight matters which the Scribes gravely discussed. Points of ceremonial purity according to the Mosaic Law seemed not to interest Him.

He allowed even His own disciples to sit down to meals with hands not ritually washed, not freed from legal pollution. When taken to task, He had defended their conduct, and He had said plainly that it did not matter what entered a man's mouth, it was what came out of his heart that mattered, and He had read the Scribes a stern lesson for hypocrisy.

When His disciples went on a Sabbath through the corn fields, they plucked the ears and rubbed them in their hands and ate them. A shocking breach of the Sabbath according to Scribal law, for no food whatever might be prepared on that day, and what was rubbing these ears in their hands but an evident preparation of food? But Christ had brushed away their scruples by quoting the case of David, who ate the loaves of proposition, and by saying that the Son of Man was Lord of the Sabbath.

In the synagogue on the Sabbath day He had defied them all and ostentatiously challenged them by curing the man with the withered hand. St. Luke says: "They were filled with madness and they

talked one with another what they might do with Jesus."

Once when teaching in a synagogue on a Sabbath Jesus had seen a woman who had been ailing eighteen years. Her spine was bent in two and she could not even completely lift her head so as to be able to look up. Of His own accord Jesus had spoken to her, laid hands on her and healed her, in defiance of well-known rabbinical law. In the treatise Shabbath xxii., 6, for instance, stands written, that, though man might wash on a Sabbath in the ordinary way, he might not apply a special douche of cold water for healing purposes. The *Mishna* gives us no less than thirty-nine specific actions forbidden on a Sabbath; one of them is "building." Now to tend a fracture or to heal any indisposition came under the category of "building" up the human frame, hence it was strictly forbidden on the Sabbath.

The chief of the synagogue was angry at this breach of the law, and as he durst not attack Christ directly he said to the crowd: "There are six days wherein to work, come therefore on those days to be healed but not on the Sabbath." But Christ had uttered a scathing rebuke: "Ye hypocrites, does not every one of you loosen your ox and your ass from its stable on a Sabbath and lead it to the trough to drink? And this daughter of Abraham, whom Satan bound these eighteen years, ought she not to have been loosed from this bondage on a Sabbath?" And while He thus spoke His enemies stood confounded, but the crowd rejoiced at the miracles Jesus did. Such public shame the Scribes did not easily forget.

Another point which must have weighed heavily

against the Man from Galilee in the eyes of the Scribes was what for lack of a better term we may reverently call His internationalism.

The reader will forgive a comparison, for clearness' sake, with modern conditions. Most of us have had occasion in recent years to realize the mentality of an Irishman, or a Czech, a Pole or a Lithuanian; and latterly of a German, say in the Ruhr, or the Tyrol or Belgium or Bohemia or Poland. We, who for centuries have been in peaceful possession of our ancestral soil, find it hard to enter into the feelings of these people. The fiercely burning and yet impotent desire to free themselves from the foreign element that aggravates them at every turn, seems to us almost an obsession. For the Jew this sentiment seemed to have the awful sanction of religion, of divine revelation itself.

The one God, Maker of heaven and earth, had made them the one Chosen People amongst all the nations of the earth, amongst the polytheists and idol-worshippers. The accursed heathen had scattered God's Chosen People over the face of the earth and oppressed them even in the small territory which was left to them in Palestine. In revenge the Jew had set up a barrier of isolation between himself and the pagan, which seems almost incredible.

When he entered the house of a pagan he brought with him something for his feet to stand on, lest even with his feet he should touch the floor of a heathen dwelling. In conversation with a pagan, he dreaded that a spot of heathen saliva might possibly touch his Jewish beard, and he himself have to undergo a ritual washing to get rid of the defilement. All this was done under the cover of religion, in accordance with

scrupulous observance of Mosaic law, but the real psychological motive was the fanatic taboo against contact with all that was not Jewish. The following prayer which dates from the days of Our Lord gives us an insight into the mind even of the religious Jew:

Ours to worship the Lord of all, to magnify Him who created in the beginning;
That He has made us not as the nations of the world, and not placed us as any of the tribes of the earth;
That He has not set our portion like unto them, nor our lot like any of their crowd;
For they worship empty vanity and pray to what cannot profit them:
But we worship the King of Kings, who stretches out the heavens,
Who maketh His Majesty to dwell on high, and the Presence of His might in the heights above.

The prayer continues in a noble strain for another nine lines, but the opening sentences show the haughty isolation of Israel even in prayer. This self-righteousness seems to have been encouraged by the leaders of piety.

We are liable to think that the Pharisee, who prayed: "O Lord, I thank thee that I am not like other men," was a caricature; but it is not so. According to B. Beracloth, 28*b*, when a man leaves the Bethammidrash (*i.e.*, the synagogue, or rabbinical lecture room) he should say the following prayer: "Eternal God, I thank thee, that thou hast associated me with those who are in thy house of doctrine, and not with those who keep away from the assembly (lit., "who sit in the corners").

The great temptation therefore for the Jew of two thousand years ago was individual and national self-righteousness and an unspeakable contempt for those

who did not keep the law. The idea that Israel might possibly cease to be the divinely privileged nation and the most favoured of God was inconceivable and abhorrent to them. It sounded like blasphemy. The Gentiles might share in some of Israel's gifts, but only through incorporation in the Ancient Covenant, as humble servants of God's privileged children.

Christ seemed to make light of Israel's claim; repeatedly He proclaimed the possibility of Israel's rejection by God, and He exalted hated aliens as sometimes being better than Jews.

He spoke the parable of the ungrateful husbandmen, who three times in succession slew the messengers of the Lord of the vineyard and at last His beloved Son. Whereupon the Lord of the vineyard destroyed those murderers and gave His vineyard to others. The crowd hearing the parable exclaimed: "God forbid!" But Christ fixed His eyes on them and said: "What then is the meaning of the words: The stone which the builders have rejected has become the head of the corner? Whosoever shall fall on that stone shall be broken, and on whomsoever it shall fall, he shall be broken asunder." The Scribes and the high priests, so St. Luke tells us, sought to lay hands on Him that very hour, but they feared the people, for they knew He had spoken the parable for them.

Christ praised the Samaritan and disparaged the priest and the levite. He compared the Pharisee unfavourably to the publican, that is, to the hated renegade Jew, as they would say, who made his money by collecting the taxes for the Romans.

Christ travelled through Samaria and preached to

the Samaritans, whereas a strict Jew would have avoided those detested half-aliens, whom the Jews called Cutheans.

Christ praised the Canaanite woman and the Centurion for their faith, and openly said: "I have not found such faith in Israel."

Christ said that strangers from afar would come and lie down at table with the children of Abraham. He foretold that the children of the kingdom, God's kingdom, Israel, would be cast out. He had threatened that, if the present Jews rejected Him, God could make children of Abraham out of the very stones of the pavement.

Finally, He had said something which they did not quite understand about the destruction of the temple and the city. All this made it possible for the Scribes, the leaders of narrowest nationalism, to rouse at least some Jews to bitter opposition to Christ, though the crowds, especially the people of Galilee, remained with Him. For till the end, even a few hours before the Crucifixion, the fear of the multitude was upon those who encompassed His death. They laboured hard to make Pilate take the responsibility, and after the Resurrection they dared do but little for fear of the people.

The Scribes, hurt in their self-interest and in their pride, hated the Man who paid no homage to their learning or their sanctity, and who by His own divine attractiveness drew the crowds after Himself and away from the rabbis. No doubt they soothed their consciences by pretending to themselves that it was their duty to destroy a man who transgressed the traditions of their fathers and who preached the future rejection of Israel.

They accomplished their plan as proud but timorous people would, whose very station depends on the goodwill of the masses. They displayed immense zeal. They said they were alarmed at the conduct of one, who claimed to be a religious teacher and yet consorted with sinners, and ate and drank with them; whose disciples did not fast and disregarded rabbinical Sabbath laws; did not wash their hands before meals and in general made light of sacred traditions; a man who prophesied the rejection of Israel and God's choice of the Gentiles, a man who seemed a law to himself, pretended to forgive sins, to be the future judge of the world, and to be in some unique sense the very Son of God. That this peasant from Galilee, who had graduated in no school, nor sat under any master, apparently worked astounding marvels, and seemed to have a rude eloquence which fascinated the people, simply maddened the cultured clique of Scribes.

When the priestly aristocracy likewise took alarm at the immense popularity of this Messias from Nazareth, the Scribes felt their opportunity had come. They influenced a sufficient number of lay-members of the Sanhedrin or "Elders of the People" to carry their point. Then they struck secretly and swiftly. His betrayal by one of His disciples rendered their design feasible. They captured Him on Thursday night, and on Friday at noon they paced up and down in front of the Cross wagging their heads, mocking and saying: "Let him now come down from the cross and we will believe in him!" The authority of the Scribes was vindicated and the rabbis reigned again in Israel.

# CHAPTER XII

## JUDAS ISCARIOT

MANY attempts have been made to analyze the character of Judas Iscariot and to understand the motives which led him to the betrayal of his Divine Master.

In recent years a number of writers with much apparatus of pseudo-scholarship have elaborated a "Judas-myth." They say such an inexplicable figure as Judas can never really have existed. Such folly needs no further comment. None the less, many a reader of the Gospel has tried to explain to himself the inner workings of Judas' mind.

Well known is the suggestion that Judas, impatient with the delay of Christ's self-manifestation as the Conquering Messias destroying the enemies of the Jews, wished to force Christ's hand by bringing about a crisis between the Prophet of Galilee and His opponents. Recent tragic poetry has endeavoured to describe Judas' increasing exasperation at "Christ's timid ways" and lack of self-assertion. Jesus so mighty in miracles and majestic in doctrine seemed to forego all His advantages when it came to facing the ultimate issues, He refused to scatter His foes and seat Himself on David's throne. Even when the people, glowing with enthusiasm, wanted "to take Him and make Him king," Christ—most unaccountably, so Judas thought—evaded His obvious chance to assert His right to His Father's Kingdom.

There can be no doubt that the Apostles from day to day awaited Christ's self-revelation in terrestrial glory. The mother of the sons of Zebedee brought her two sons, James and John, and begged as special favour that they might sit, the one to the right, the other to the left of Him, when He should come into His kingdom. She evidently dreamt that she would see her sons important State officials in the realm of of the Messias.

Even Peter, whose ardent love for Christ made him willingly accept every word of his Master, quickly and vehemently objected when he heard of coming sufferings and humiliations, nay, of crucifixion itself in Jerusalem, and he merited the strongest rebuke Christ ever gave to a disciple. Nay, even after the death on Calvary, the two disciples going to Emmaus were sobbing out their grief and disappointment. "We thought it would be He who would have redeemed Israel," and on the road to Bethany on Ascension Day itself the Apostles crowd round Him asking: Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom of Israel? There is no doubt that all Apostles with hardly suppressed excitement awaited the overthrow of foreign domination in Palestine and the triumph of the Son of David, but the Holy Ghost led them into all truth on Pentecost day and taught them otherwise.

Judas must have shared this expectation. This, however, is no reason for making this expectation the motive of his crime. There seems to be nothing in the Sacred Text to support this suggestion and thus it remains a mere guess and nothing more.

Another suggestion, which claims support from the text itself, is as follows:

Judas claimed the primacy amongst the Apostles. As he held the purse of the little band, as the gifts of Christ's followers and admirers came into his hands, and as he apparently made the purchases and the disembursements, such as those to the poor, he may well have imagined himself the most important of the Twelve. This would account for a strange reading in St. Mark xiv., 10: "Judas Iscariot, the one of the Twelve," in common parlance of that day "the one" can certainly mean "the first" of the Twelve. But the reading is doubtful and the meaning, though possible, not certain.

It is true that the Twelve amongst themselves quarrelled about their precedence. In St. Matthew xviii., 1, the Apostles ask more or less in the abstract: "Who then is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?" but Our Lord knew they had been "reasoning among themselves which of them should be the greatest." Our Lord asked them pointedly: What were you reasoning in the way? But they held their peace, for they had been disputing with one another who was the greatest, says St. Mark. Jesus sat down and took a little child and embraced it and gave them the gentle rebuke: Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven.

Just before reaching Jericho on His last journey to Jerusalem, Jesus received the request of James and John and their mother for the best places in the kingdom. But when the ten remaining disciples heard of this they were moved with indignation concerning James and John. Yea, even at the Last Supper itself, "when the hour was come, and He sat down and the Apostles with Him" there arose a contention amongst

them who of them was accounted to be the greatest. Easterns are very punctilious about their place at table, and this sensitiveness led the Apostles to an unseemly squabble even in presence of their Master, so that He tells them not to behave as the heathen do who lord it over one another. But their strife seems to have been so persistent that Jesus rises and shames them by washing their feet.

It is quite possible that Judas, seeing that Peter's official position among the Apostles was greater than his own, felt angry at the preference shown to Simon, or the evident love of Jesus for St. John. Possible, too, that this last struggle for precedence embittered him, and, out of vexation with his Master and fellow-disciples, he left the upper room, but it seems extremely doubtful that this acted as the chief motive for his betrayal.

What then was the real motive of the betrayal?

One characteristic of Judas is directly stated in the Gospels, and that surely must have been the main ground for his action. St. John, in Ch. xii., 6, tells us that on the Saturday previous to the Passion Our Lord stayed at Bethany with Mary, Martha and Lazarus, and Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with spikenard of great price. Judas said: "Why was not this sold for 300 pence and given to the poor?" According to the other evangelists, however, some of the disciples concurred in Judas' sentiments and said: Why this waste? And apparently spoke roughly to Mary, so that Our Lord interfered and said: Why do ye trouble this woman?

Judas was clearly the leader of the group, whose indignant whispering went through the house while it "was filled with the odour of the ointment" as the

Gospel graphically puts it. Now St. John adds: Judas "said this, not because he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and having the purse, took away the things that were put therein."

Our Blessed Lord and the Twelve lived entirely on alms. The Apostles had "left their nets and followed" Him. Possibly St. Matthew, a farmer of taxes, had some little property. Judas himself was apparently not from Galilee but from Judæa; possibly he had some possessions. But it was with evident truth that St. Peter could say: "Lord, we have left all and followed Thee, what, therefore, shall we have in return?" The rich young man was told: "If thou wilt be perfect, sell whatever thou hast and give it to the poor." When he refused, he lost the right to apostleship. When the Seventy were sent out, they were warned against anxiety about maintenance and told to rely on the liberality of believers.

To maintain thirteen men, however, in the necessities of life means a considerable outlay. Christ and His followers, though poor, did not live in abject destitution. The Son of Man had not where to lay His head, He had no home of His own, but there is no evidence that He and His often suffered the pangs of hunger. Our Lord certainly had wealthy friends: Joseph of Arimathea and Simon the Leper, for instance, and women of note were amongst His followers, as Johanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward. The alms that came in were, no doubt, often abundant. It seems to have been Our Lord's custom to see that any surplus should from time to time be given to the poor. This is twice referred to in the Gospels.

When Judas left the Last Supper his fellow-

apostles took it for granted that Our Lord had given him some directions either to purchase something for the feast or to distribute some money to the poor. St. John, by his use of the Greek imperfect, indicates that Judas was in the habit of embezzling the moneys given. It was not a rare occurrence. Moreover from the verb used we gather that Judas "carried them off," he could not keep them on his person but had a secret store somewhere. St. John uses a graphic description for those alms which would put one in mind of the coins thrown by an enthusiastic and simple audience: ta ballomena. Judas would then return with empty purse and pretend he had given money to the poor. Possibly he salved his conscience by pretending to himself that he was only saving for possible future needs of the Twelve, who might be one day in penury owing to the unthrifty ways of their Master.

The Gospels certainly lend colour to the idea that "the waste" of three hundred pence worth at Bethany drove Judas to exasperation, and was the source of the thought of making some money out of the priests who wanted to know where they could find Our Lord by night.

Another glimpse into the darkness of Judas' soul we owe, likewise, to St. John. Many months before the Passion when Jesus had ended His teaching concerning the Blessed Sacrament in the synagogue in Capharnahum, He turned to His disciples with the words: Doth this scandalize you? There are some of you that believe not! For, remarks the Evangelist, Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that did not believe and who he was that would betray Him.

After this many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him. Then Jesus said to the Twelve: Will you also go away? And after Simon Peter's noble answer: "We have believed that Thou art the Christ, the Holy One of God" Jesus with mingled joy and sorrow said: "Indeed, I chose you, Twelve, but one of you is a devil!" Now, He meant Judas Iscariot, says St. John, Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who was about to betray Him as he was one of the Twelve.

Judas, therefore, in his heart of hearts had joined those who, on hearing that Our Lord intended to give His Flesh and Blood as meat and drink, said: That is a hard saying and who can bear it? Outwardly, indeed, he remained with the Twelve and with Christ, perhaps there still remained some lingering belief in his Master sufficient to prevent an open severance. "One of you is a devil" is a terribly strong expression on divine lips, and the words evidently re-echoed in St. John's mind, when, in describing Judas' withdrawal from the Last Supper, he says: "Satan entered into him."

It is certainly remarkable that having disbelieved the promise of the Blessed Sacrament, he either ate it to his own damnation or was excluded from it. It is indeed a miracle of longsuffering that Our Lord allowed for many months that "devil" in His intimate circle, being all the while so vividly conscious of his hateful presence.

Once having disbelieved, or at least doubted, his Master on one point, Judas' mind must soon have drifted farther away. Till the end, it is clear, he thought Our Lord a good and holy and innocent man. He must have known Him endowed with

astounding miraculous powers, but he regarded Him as somehow fallible like other men, as capable of being deceived by the little clumsy ruses of a thief and a hypocrite. One thing is quite evident, Judas never dreamt that his betrayal would cause his Master any permanent harm.

Our Lord had so often escaped His enemies—once being driven to the edge of a precipice by an infuriated mob, He had simply turned round, swept them all back, and passed through them—they had so often taken up stones to throw at Him and yet nothing had happened, that even if they captured His person, nothing serious would happen. They would not dare to put Him to death, He was too great a favourite with the multitude, and even if they dared, His miraculous power was great enough to prevent any fatal issue. Judas knew they were scheming for an opportunity to bring Him before the Sanhedrin, if it could be done without raising a tumult amongst the people. Why should not he make a little money out of the affair?

Such or similar thoughts must have been in his mind, obsessed as it was by greed, and since his internal lapse from the faith at the Eucharistic controversy alienated inwardly from Christ and His followers.

Now let us consider Judas at the Last Supper. In the upper room Christ indicated with ever-increasing distinctness who was to betray Him. He spoke for Judas' sake, but also, as St. John states, to strengthen His disciples when later they should realize that He had foretold it.

First, during the washing of the feet there is a general indication of some great sin in the heart of

one of them. When washing Peter's feet Jesus saith to him: he that is being washed needs but to wash his feet and he is clean wholly. And you are clean, but not all. For He knew who it was that would betray Him; therefore He said: "Ye are not all clean." Obviously Judas' feet were washed likewise, but Our Lord had done so in silence.

A little later came the more detailed announcement that someone in closest intimacy with Him was about to do Him shameful hurt. Our Lord uses the telling words of the 40th Psalm to describe it: "He that eateth bread with Me, shall lift up his heel against Me." What more foul than to plant your foot on the heart of a bosom friend!

Then after a while a third prophecy followed. Being troubled in spirit at the cool effrontery with which Judas kept his countenance He solemnly testified: Amen, Amen I say unto you, one of you shall betray me! The Apostles in their amazement and grief, burst out with the anxious question: Is it I, Lord?

At first Jesus seems not to have answered them and in their distress they looked at one another and argued among themselves about this terrible prophecy. Our Lord then, without indicating the traitor, repeated His prophecy in other words; more telling, more awful: One of those who is sitting at table with Me now, "one of you, who dips his hand in the same dish with Me," is about to betray Me. It emphasized the crime, but did not single out the individual, all of the Apostles or most had done so during the supper, in any case whether they remembered the sameness of the dish or not, they were eat-

ing at the same table with Him, and that clearly was His meaning.

Peter could bear the suspense no longer and beckoned to John, whose head was leaning on Jesus' bosom, at any cost to tell him whom the Lord meant. Even John did not know, but he used his familiarity with his Divine Master to whisper to Him: Lord, who is it? Jesus could not resist His beloved disciple and softly answered: He to whom I shall reach bread dipped. And when He had dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot the son of Simon.

Why did not John instantly rise with a shriek of horror and denounce the traitor? Why? Because neither John nor any other of the Apostles had the remotest suspicion that Our Lord was speaking of *immediate* actualities; they looked upon the prophecy as one to be fulfilled in the distant future. Some time during the coming years, one of them would turn traitor. The thought was terrible enough, but none of the Apostles doubted one another's sincerity and utter honesty in the present. The Calvary of the morrow was utterly hidden from them. That anyone here and now amongst them was actually harbouring thoughts to betray the Master, whom all apparently so passionately loved, was simply inconceivable to them. At present, at least, nought but adoring love was in each one's heart, whatever sin might be due to human frailty in distant years.

So John could only stare at Judas half in alarm and half in pity, thinking it a mystery how so good a a man could possibly do so wicked a thing in years to come, and out of sheer pity and respect for an elder Apostle, John dared not repeat Our Lord's words to others.

Judas himself, however, when receiving the morsel, to avert any possible attention to himself, repeated what all had said: Is it I, Lord? And Jesus answered, so as to be heard only by Judas himself and John: Thou hast said it; what you are about to do, do it quickly. The latter part of the sentence was caught by the others, and they thought that Judas had to purchase something or give something to the poor. Judas having swallowed the morsel, rose forthwith and went out into the night. Whether he realized the fullness of Our Lord's knowledge even then, is doubtful.

Was Judas present at the institution of the Blessed Sacrament? This will never be known for certain. Neither the Gospels nor tradition is quite decisive. The institution was after the supper; at what interval, if any, we do not know. Whether the above dismissal by Our Blessed Lord took place during the interval or afterwards has been in doubt from the earliest times. Celebrated names can be cited for either opinion; perhaps the opinion that he was present has had most supporters during the centuries.

We now come to the actual betrayal.

Judas had remained long enough at the supper to ascertain that Our Lord intended not to go to Bethany that evening, but to pass the night at Gethsemane. As soon as he possessed that information he could go. Now in the darkness of the night he is finding the priests.

The price of his treason had no doubt already been settled. Thirty pieces of silver, about three pounds ten of our present money, but ten times that sum in purchasing power, was the value of a slave according to the Law of Deuteronomy. Beyond doubt the

priests had on purpose fixed the amount at that figure to express their contempt for the carpenter from Nazareth. Judas cannot but have realized this, but for him, accustomed to dealing with the pence given in alms, it probably seemed a considerable sum.

He must have told the priests that Jesus had somehow discovered his secret dealings with them and that they had to act at once or not at all. The Master's suspicions had evidently been roused, and unless they captured him that very night, all chance would be gone. In consequence they changed their plans. They had meant to avoid the feast days of the Pasch out of fear that there might be a riot amongst the people. They now take the risk to capture their victim on the very eve of the Passover. They took double precautions, however.

The arrest was to take place by Jewish police acting under instructions of the Sanhedrin and with the assistance of a cohort of Roman military. They expected they would have to overpower the eleven Apostles before they could reach the Master. Hence they went fully armed, and to prevent any possible escape of Jesus during the turmoil, provision was made for abundant light of lanterns and torches.

According to St. John's text it is clear that Judas himself took a leading part in these preparations, in fact they seem to have acted under his orders. They must at least have been a hundred men. Judas' character lays itself bare in his last instruction: "Lead Him away cautiously." Caution was Judas' motto. There arose this curious difficulty, that none of the band was quite certain of knowing Our Lord by sight, especially in the half-dark and on the spur of the moment.

The difficulty was overcome in Judas' characteristic fashion. He would walk a few steps in front of them, pass through the people probably gathered round their Master, go straight up to Jesus and give Him the usual sign of respect, the Oriental kiss of peace. "That will be the man, carry him off cautiously." It was safest to keep up appearances even to the last. Hail, Rabbi! said Judas, putting as much heartiness in his salutation as he could. Jesus allowed Himself to be kissed, and detaining Judas for an instant said: Friend (or perhaps better according to the Greek of St. Matthew: comrade, companion, my good friend) whereto hast thou come! Judas, doest thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss? But Judas quickly detached himself from his Master and disappeared in the dark.

He had done his work and earned the money; he was too cautious to expose himself any further. Straightway now he went to claim the thirty pieces of silver. It cannot have been far from midnight.

What happened between midnight and dawn?

Only a little while did Judas gloat over his dearly-bought treasure. He would go and see what had happened to Jesus. John and Peter had managed to get into the courtyard of the house of Caiaphas; it cannot have been difficult for Judas to do the same. To meet them was of course the last thing in the world he desired, and it is not likely that he did. Peter's loud voice was sufficient warning to keep him away from the fire where he was warming himself. That Judas was actually inside the judgment hall while Jesus was condemned is also extremely unlikely, but that Judas hung about somewhere on or about the premises during the early hours of the

morning can be concluded from the text: "Now Judas seeing that He was condemned."

Most natural it would be if, out of sight, somewhere at a half-open door or a window, he watched the proceedings, saw Jesus apparently bereft of His former miraculous powers, disfigured by the blows and the cruel mockery of the soldiery and heard the solemn condemnation: Guilty of death! Guilty of death! by the members of the Sanhedrin.

The greatness of his crime came suddenly upon him. It was like Cain looking upon the dead face of his brother Abel and, club still in hand, thinking his sin too great to be forgiven, or, like Nero, who, the instant he had murdered his mother, was overcome with the foulness of his own deed, as Tacitus tells.

His remorse manifests itself in sudden loathing for the price of blood, which he still carries with him, in anger at those who have tempted him to this crime, but not in an attempt to undo the evil or in a cry of mercy to Him whose blood he had sold. Cain's despair took the form of a vivid realization of the abhorrence which he would inspire in every human being who would meet him. God might forgive, but men certainly never would, and his wounded pride would not bear the contempt of his fellow men.

The psychology of Judas' despair was no doubt similar. He rushes to the temple to see some of the priests. To those at least he can confess. They are criminals like him.

"I have sinned, betraying innocent blood."

"What is that to us, look thou to it."

Judas realized that even they despised him. There are degrees in crime. Even these priests gather their robes round them, not to be soiled by him, when he

comes near. All the world must loathe him, he can face no human being again, death is the only way out of it. Now he is searching for a length of stout rope, and having found it he winds his way through the narrow streets of Jerusalem to gain the open. He soon came to some lonesome spot and saw a tree overhanging the valley of Hinnom. The rope was quickly fastened round his neck, and round the branch. Then a leap in empty space and the body hangs high over the valley.

After a while the passers-by notice the grisly sight, but no one gives himself the trouble to take down the loathsome corpse. After some days the weight of the decomposing body tells on the rope or its fastening, and down it comes, striking something or another, and breaking in two, its bowels gush out and foul the earth.

Meanwhile the priests have collected the coins which Judas had flung at their feet in the temple and with true rabbinical casuistry they remark that they could not put it in the temple treasury, as it was the price of blood, and Deuteronomy xxiii., 18, forbids such use of bloodmoney. On that day, or perhaps later, they come to an agreement and buy a piece of ground for it, known as the potter's field, and appoint it as a burial place for Jews, strangers to Jerusalem, who happened to die in the Holy City.

For many years the field was called "blood field," as St. Matthew testifies. Even in the fifth century the field was well known, as St. Jerome tells us. To-day some field is pointed out which is possibly the field in question. It would be natural that Judas' corpse was the first to be buried in it, but this cannot be proven.

Thus was an ancient prophecy fulfilled.

Some four centuries back, Jehovah the Good Shepherd of Israel, had sent Zachary the prophet to the elders of the people to say in His name that He would be their shepherd no more. "Give me my wages and let me go, or pay me nought and it is still well, but Jehovah will shepherd the flock of Jacob no more." The elders in scorn paid the prophet his wages, the price of a slave, thirty pieces of silver and nothing more. The insult was to Jehovah Himself, not to His minister alone, hence God's spirit within the prophet spake: Take that fine sum, the price at which they estimate My value, go and cast it in the temple to the potter. Mysterious words indeed and actions of secret meaning, till the Good Shepherd was sold for thirty pieces of silver. Judas, who sold him, cast the money in the temple and the priests bought a potter's field for it. Thus did Judas obtain a field for his iniquity, as St. Peter said. Judas became landed proprietor of a sort, for it was his money with which the field was bought and, in a sense, it became his, the more so if he occupied it in death as his burial place. He gained his field "but his episcopate let another take," continued the Apostle in the words of the Psalmist.

Thus one of the Twelve "went to his own place" in the fearsome words of Scripture, yet the Eleven chose Matthias, and he was numbered with the Twelve.

No man is necessary, no man can defeat God's plans, one goes and another takes his place.

# CHAPTER XIII

## CHRIST BEFORE ANNAS AND CAIAPHAS

Soon after midnight Our Lord, having been led cautiously from Gethsemane through the streets of Jerusalem, arrived at the house of Caiaphas.

Before being actually brought before the high-priest, St. John tells us that He was brought to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas. This Annas had himself been highpriest from A.D. 6 to A.D. 15 when he was deposed by the Roman Governor, Valerius Gratus. After a short interregnum of Ismael ben Phiabi he had been succeeded by his own son Eleazar, and again, after a year's interval during which Simon ben Kanith was highpriest, this Eleazar was followed by Caiaphas, Annas' son-in-law. At the trial of Jesus he had been highpriest about twelve years. But these twelve years had not deprived Annas of influence and standing as head of the highpriestly family. Annas and Caiaphas apparently lived in different wings of the same palace, in the courtyard of which Peter's denial took place. It is remarkable that St. Luke marks the date of the Baptist's preaching as "under the highpriests Annas and Caiaphas." In Acts iv. also Peter and John were brought "before Annas the highpriest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the highpriest." It is clear that the family stuck closely

together and that though technically Caiaphas was in function, his father-in-law was the dominating figure and leading spirit amongst "the princes and ancients and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem."

Annas then shows his eagerness and his commanding position in cross-questioning Christ before He reaches Caiaphas. He questions Him concerning His disciples and His teaching. It was notorious that Christ from the very beginning of His public life had chosen twelve disciples whom He called Apostles, and on whom He conferred privileges and powers. He had besides gathered seventy disciples and sent them two by two into the villages and hamlets to announce His coming. These disciples worked marvels in their Master's name, they anointed the sick with oil and healed them, they preached that the kingdom of God was at hand, they baptized like the Baptist, though Jesus Himself did not baptize. Christ had set up a kind of organization with spiritual powers, He was surrounded by people who did His behest, He behaved as a founder of a new religion and gathered faithful. Annas asked what was the meaning of it all.

Christ answered: I have spoken openly to the world and I have ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, where all the Jews come together, and in secret I have spoken nothing. Ask those who have heard what I have spoken to them, surely they know what I have said. Why askest thou Me?

In His reply Christ repudiates two thoughts in Annas' mind—first, that Christ had some secret doctrine and aim which only the initiated knew. A man of Annas' stamp would ask with an air of worldly wisdom from this Galilean: "Tell me, my man, what

do you *really* want? I quite understand that in speaking to the crowd you must use fair words, but, no doubt, to your favourite disciples you speak in a different strain." Secondly, Christ emphasizes that if His doctrine is to be a matter of accusation, it is not right to ask the accused, when legal witnesses in great number can be obtained in the proper form.

Christ's answer evidently nonplussed the wily old man; the justice of it was plain to the bystanders, and a servant, in order to get his master out of an awkward position, struck Christ a blow in the face saying: Answerest thou the highpriest so? Christ during His trial was extraordinarily silent, but He does answer this brutal servant: If I have spoken evil, point out the evil; if well, why strikest thou Me?

There was a meekness, and a correctness and precision in that reply, which made the position of Annas still more impossible, hence he gets out of the difficulty by sending Christ, still bound, to Caiaphas. It had been but a short questioning and no one had troubled to undo the bonds with which they had dragged Christ from the garden, and, bound as He is, He is now brought before Caiaphas.

The priests, scribes and elders were the three well-known parties in the Sanhedrin. These three parties are described in the Gospel as the whole Council, not of course that all the seventy-one members were present, but that it was an official and plenary sitting and not merely a party affair. One of the elders of the people at least was not present, Joseph of Arimathea, of whom St. Luke (xxiii.) says that he took no part in their plans and councils.

These people were gathered together in Caiaphas'

house. This was illegal, for the *Mishna,* in the treatise *Middoth,* tells us that the proper meeting place was the Xystos hall. Caiaphas' house was probably chosen because at night, the Temple gates being closed, they had no access to the public hall. Moreover, it was illegal to hold a meeting before the morning sacrifice, and in criminal cases, involving the death sentence, the sitting could not even be protracted into the night. Again no court was allowed to be held on holidays and Sabbaths, as the treatise *Bezah* tells us. Further, the death penalty was never allowed to be carried out till the day after the verdict; in consequence, such cases were not undertaken even the day before a holiday or a Sabbath. In consequence, both place and time of the trial were illegal, if we have to believe the *Mishna.* The Gospels tell us that the whole Council sought testimony against Jesus—this again was an illegality. In cases involving a capital sentence the witnesses in favour had to be heard before the witnesses against the accused.

Above all, the Evangelists tell us, they sought false witnesses. The Council had made up their mind that in any case some testimony had to be found which would involve the prisoner in a capital offence. Whether these witnesses tried to find reasons for a sentence of blasphemy we do not know, probably any sentence which would be a means to bring Christ to death was sought.

According to the Gospels the suborned witnesses disagreed. The preparations for the trial had clearly been short and hurried. It is often thought that the raising of Lazarus had brought matters to a head, or perhaps the unexpected opportunity to capture Jesus afforded by the betrayal of Judas. They had

done their best to avoid the festal days of the Passover, dreading the danger of a popular tumult in favour of Our Lord. His friends were mostly Galileans, and several scores of thousands must have come from Galilee to keep the Pasch. It was therefore a most undesirable time for their scheme. Still, as a matter of fact, Jesus was put to death on, or on the eve of, the Passover itself. Something evidently had upset their plans and their only safety lay in seeing the matter through as swiftly and as secretly as possible, practically before the bulk of Christ's followers could rally to prevent the execution.

Owing to lack of time, therefore, the mock trial was a failure. According to the Mosaic Law at least two witnesses had to give concordant testimony, and as strict formalists, however unscrupulous, they could not dispense with this formality. At last two witnesses arose who at first seemed to supply what was wanted.

According to St. Matthew, Christ was accused of having said: I can destroy the temple of God and after three days rebuild it. St. Mark has the words seemingly of the other witness: I shall destroy this temple made with hands and after three days build another not made with hands. Both testimonies were false in actual wording and in the meaning imputed to them. Christ *had* said: "Destroy ye this temple and in three days I shall rebuild it." It was not Christ who claimed to destroy any temple, but the people to whom He spoke were regarded as doing it, and when they had destroyed it, He would rebuild it. Moreover, He had not spoken of Herod's Temple on Mount Zion, but of the Temple of His body. It was a prophecy of His resurrection.

The falsehood of the testimony itself cannot have troubled the Sanhedrin very much, but they were undone by the fact that the witnesses did not verbally agree. "I can destroy" is not "I shall destroy"; "the temple of God" is not this "temple made with hands." "To rebuild it" is not "to build another not made with hands." These people had learned their lesson badly by heart. As to the members of the Sanhedrin, criminals though many of them were, they required at least two people who agreed literally. Such was the inexorable law of Jewish jurisprudence.

It is noteworthy that in the trial of Christ we find no speech for the defence at all, and no suggestion that any was made. Our Lord himself said nothing. It is true that in Jewish circles juridical science had not developed so fully, but Roman and Greek examples and the then common instinct for legal defence must have pressed for some words in favour of the accused. Later Mishnaic law lays emphasis on the witnesses in favour of the defendant.

The President of the Court, Caiaphas, attempts to cover up the failure of the last two witnesses by addressing Our Lord in this way: Dost thou answer nothing? What are these people witnessing against thee? Caiaphas does as if he were impressed by their testimony and asks Jesus for an explanation of His saying about destroying the Temple and re-building it in three days.

But Jesus kept silent. It was not His duty to make witnesses agree, or by His speech to give Caiaphas some opportunity. Thus His silence leaves the discordance of the witnesses exactly as it was.

Caiaphas now attempts a different method. There was in the Book of Leviticus, chapter v., provision

that a witness could have an oath administered to him by the public authority to answer if he knew anything of a crime. It was a subpœna with a divine sanction and the witness was bound to speak. Caiaphas now illegally attempts to apply this, not to a witness, but to the accused person. It was against all justice for the judge to administer the oath to the person on trial before him and thus make him accuse himself.

Still, such was Caiaphas' endeavour. If we abstract for a moment from the fact that it was a court of justice, trying a crimnal case, and that Caiaphas' ignorance about Christ's claim was a pretence, there was a solemnity in this question which Our Lord acknowledged. This solemnity arose from the fact that Caiaphas was the spiritual head of the Jewish Nation and could put this question in virtue of his supreme dignity as representative of the people of God: I put thee under oath to tell us whether Thou art the Christ, the Messias, the Son of God!

Christ answered in the solemn way of the Jews: "Thou hast said it!" as St. Matthew puts it, or "I am" as St. Mark translates it for his Gentile readers.

What was in the mind of Caiaphas when he asked this question? Did he merely ask whether Jesus claimed to be the Messias or did he ask whether Jesus claimed to be the Son of God?

He asked both, though the second part of the question cannot have been before Caiaphas' mind with that metaphysical clearness which it has before ours. None could be ignorant of the fact that Jesus spoke and acted as if He were more than man and, in some unique sense, Son of God. Caiaphas accordingly

combines both claims: the Messias, the Son of God. Caiaphas' question was the correct reflection of what was understood to be the precise claim of Jesus.

Six months before Christ had asked His Apostles: Who do the people say I am; and after recounting various strange sayings, Simon had said: Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God. Christ had praised him as having received a revelation from His Father. His was not merely a claim to Messiahship, but a claim to Messiahship and a peculiar Sonship combined. It was Christ who had combined the two ideas into one. He used the expression of Daniel of 'the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven' as a means to convey His teaching. He claimed not merely to be the Messias, but in clearing that name of its spurious political associations in the minds of the Jews, He exalted it to a unique filiation of God.

The old man Simeon had represented ancient Jewry. He had a revelation that he should not see death till he saw the Christ, the Messias, the Anointed of Jahveh, Jehovah's ideal Davidic king. Christ, however, had claimed more, He said He was the Anointed Son of God. Sometimes He actually identified Himself with God, He distinguished Himself from God, His Father, though in some sense one with Him. "We want to stone thee, because thou, being man makest thyself God," this pictures the impression created by Christ's claim on the crowds of Jerusalem. Caiaphas cannot but have known this, hence the wording of his adjuration. It must have been reported to Caiaphas that Jesus of Nazareth was not satisfied even with being the Messias, David's Son, but He must needs be David's Lord, to whom God said: Sit thou at My right hand!

Christ answered: "I am, but from henceforth you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

In homely terms the answer meant: What you said is true, but though your words are verbally correct, they mean more than you understand. It is only a mere phrase to you now, you say it, but I tell you from now on you shall *see* the Son of Man. Now you say it, believe me, henceforth, you shall see it.

Our Lord combines in His answer Daniel vii., 13, and Psalm cix., 1: "Sit thou at My right hand."

Daniel's vision was thus: After the vision of the four beasts arising out of the sea, signifying four earthly kingdoms, Daniel saw and lo, one, like unto a son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and he came even unto the Ancient of days and they presented him before Him, and He gave him power and glory and a kingdom, and all peoples, tribes and tongues shall serve him, his power is an everlasting power, that shall not be taken away.

This "son of man coming on the clouds of heaven" had already in some Jewish circles been understood of a superhuman heavenly figure, a sort of heavenly Messias and judge of all mankind. Christ united for the first time the real Messias, David's Son with Daniel's Man on the clouds of heaven, and claimed both titles as His.

He was the "Son" of the Psalms, who was told to sit at His Father's right hand, to whom the Father said: To-day I have begotten thee.

Notice the characteristic Jewish Rabbinic expression: Sit at the right hand of THE POWER, instead of "God." Rabbis had numerous substitutes for the name of God which they did not pronounce and THE

POWER was one of them. It is one of these little touches which makes St. Matthew so vividly Jewish.

Then the highpriest rent his garments and said: He has blasphemed. What need have we of witnesses. Look, you have heard the blasphemy. What think ye? And they answering said: He is guilty of death!

The mere claim to Messiahship may not have been blasphemy to Jewish ears, but of the blasphemy of Christ's claim there could not be any doubt: The Messias, the Son of God, sitting at the right hand of the Power!

The tearing of garments by Caiaphas has been much discussed. Many, even ancient Fathers, have seen a highly symbolic meaning in this action, *viz.*, the cessation of the Jewish priesthood, even as the tearing asunder of the veil of the Temple signified the abolition of the Old Law. But we must remember that Caiaphas obviously wore neither his priestly nor his highpriestly garments, and that the symbolism, therefore, is not so clear. It has also been remarked in ancient and modern times that Caiaphas transgressed the Jewish Law by his actions, but this is less correct. The highpriest was not allowed to tear his garments as a sign of mourning for the death of a private person, but there was no law forbidding him to do so on occasion of a national calamity or at the hearing of blasphemy. From the Gospel we cannot be certain what precise garments Caiaphas tore. St. Mark says: "chitonas," St. Matthew, "himatia." If modern practice be illustrative of ancient custom, we may recall the custom of tearing all garments except the innermost about three inches on the left side of the breast in mourning for parents, and of the

uppermost garment alone on the right side for other relatives. It is certain that Caiaphas, standing, tore his garments from above downwards. Putting his hand on the neck of his garments he tore a rent of a few inches down the breast. We have not to imagine a sudden access of grief in that worthy, which drove him to a strange unwonted expression of misery. He must have been secretly glad at Christ's admission, which helped him out of an awkward situation. This token of grief was for a priest no doubt the proper thing and we may rest assured that it was performed in a sufficiently genteel manner.

The sitting of the Sanhedrin must have broken up between three and four o'clock at night. We gather this from the fact that Christ looked at Peter after his third denial when the cock had crowed for the third time. Now, Peter was in the courtyard and the only opportunity he had of seeing Our Blessed Lord was when Christ was removed from the Council room to His place of detention for the remainder of the night, that is, immediately after the conclusion of the sitting of the Sanhedrin.

Before the dispersal of the councillors, however, a ghastly scene took place. The formal sitting over, and Christ being technically a blasphemer in the eyes of the law and condemned to death, some of the councillors on going out vented their hatred on Him by spitting in His face and taunting Him, saying: Messiah! now give us a prophecy! and all other sorts of mockery. The warders of the Prisoner, encouraged by the example of their masters, when they had brought Him to His cell for the rest of the hours of the night, had an elaborate game with this pseudo-prophet and condemned blasphemer. They bound a

cloth before His eyes, and striking Him on the face, they asked Him: Now, prophet, who was it that gave you that blow? At last they tired of their cruelty and Jesus was alone for an hour or so and waited for the morning.

Towards six o'clock in the morning—early says St. Matthew and St. Mark, at daybreak says St. Luke—Christ was again brought into the Council-room.

What was the motive of this second sitting?

Some have maintained that the Jewish authorities intended to legalize the verdict of the night sitting, which was invalid because no sentence could be given except by daytime according to the *Mishna*.

Possibly so, but then they would still have left the illegality of the trial and the execution being on the same day, and this was also forbidden by the *Mishna*. According to Jewish reckoning the day runs from sunset to sunset. They would have introduced also a new illegality in dispensing with the hearing of witnesses in the supposedly only legal meeting in the morning.

Some maintain that the morning sitting merely considered the ways and means to obtain Pilate's endorsement of the sentence of the previous night. But for such a petition for his sanction a meeting of the Sanhedrin was unnecessary. As Roman and Gentile, Pilate obviously could not enquire into a question of Jewish religious law. The permission to carry out the sentence for blasphemy, *i.e.*, permission to stone the culprit, condemned in a legal sitting of the Sanhedrin, was a mere formal affair. Pilate could have no reason to refuse it. As a matter of fact, Pilate gave it at once, but the Jews would not have it.

Finally, some maintain that the hearing of wit-

nesses alone took place at night, and the legal verdict and sentence in the morning, but this seems directly two distinct meetings and the official sentence was already given at the one during the night.

There remains the true interpretation. They met in the morning, not to obtain Pilate's sanction for the execution of their night sentence but to consider how to make Pilate condemn Jesus, not on religious, but on common criminal grounds. Before Pilate not a word is whispered about this religious condemnation for blasphemy and only towards the end, when in despair how to obtain Pilate's sentence, they mention the point of religion. They wished the trial before the Governor to be a purely secular one and in the morning they wanted to draw up a new set of accusations for Pilate. As St. Matthew puts it, it was only a question how to kill Jesus.

At first it seems a difficulty that the proceedings of the morning sitting, which are only narrated by St. Luke, are almost identical with those of the night, told by St. Matthew and St. Mark. But, first of all, although very similar at first sight, they are in reality showing several points of difference. They rather presuppose the night sitting than repeat it. The similarity, furthermore, is nothing really improbable. At the morning sitting, no doubt, more members of the Sanhedrin were present. At night, when the outcome of their daring *coup* in capturing Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane was still uncertain, and not widely known, though a quorum of the Sanhedrin assembled—twenty-five were enough—we cannot expect it to have been a well attended session. Now, in the morning, the essential part is again gone through for the benefit of the new-comers.

There is no calling and examining of witnesses, but just the acknowledgment by Our Lord of His claim before them all. It is remarkable that they pose as anxious to know definitely once more. "If thou art the Christ, tell us!" If I tell you, answered Our Lord, you will not believe, and if I put you questions you will not answer.

Christ puts forward the uselessness of His replying to people who do not want information, who are not out to learn. Christ knows them. He has put them questions before, and they turned away saying: We do not know. They have asked Him questions before for the sole purpose of entrapping Him in His speech. They do not want to know, for all their pretended eagerness in the phrase: tell us! They merely want His verbal utterance for their malignant purpose. Christ certainly claimed to be the Messias, but not a Messias in their sense, who was coming to break the power of Rome and lead Israel to victory in battle. His Messiahship had nothing to do with any political scheming. But of what use would explanation be? Hence silence is the best. He has solemnly answered the same questions only a few hours ago. He refuses now to give a direct answer. But for all that Our Lord adds: From now onwards the Son of Man shall be sitting at the right hand of the Power of God. My earthly career is ended, henceforward I need only think of my sitting at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. Our Lord's mind had already looked beyond His sufferings and death to the glory that was His with the Father. Let us but remember the words of Christ's prayer after the Last Supper: "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do, and now glorify Thou Me, O

Father, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was made."

The Sanhedrin at once catch at the avowal contained in the latter part of Christ's sentence and say: But, then, thou are the Son of God? Christ had actually said "the Son of Man," but as He claimed to sit at the right hand of God the inference lay at hand and they take it for granted that He claims to be the Son of God. Such had been the very essence of His avowal at the night sitting and they knew it.

Christ answered: Ye say it, I am.

They said: What need have we of testimony? For we ourselves have now heard it from His mouth.

That suffices and they can with self-satisfied consciences carry out their scheme, for they themselves have all heard the blasphemy. They think themselves justified in having Christ put to death anyhow, on any accusations they think the Governor is likely to believe, and as a body they rise and lead Christ to Pilate.

# CHAPTER XIV

## CHRIST BEFORE PONTIUS PILATE

How a Roman Governor, against his will and better judgment, came to crucify a man whom he knew to be innocent, and whom he wanted to save, is a problem for historians. It is an interesting study so to read and to combine the four Gospel accounts of Christ's Passion, and so to illustrate them from outside sources as to reconstruct the past and to realize the sequence of events and the underlying motives which made Pontius Pilate finally responsible for the tragedy of Calvary.

First. Why did the Jews hand Christ over to Pilate at all? Merely to get his endorsement or leave to carry out the death sentence of the Sanhedrin? Obviously not, for when Pilate directly granted this to them, they did not accept it. "Take him you and judge him according to your law," said the Governor. This was formal leave to proceed, according to Jewish law. The very fact of their bringing Jesus before Pilate had already made it clear that it was not a question of a punishment less than death, for such punishment they could inflict without Pilate's permission. What Pilate granted was what they had asked. When, therefore, they answered: "We are not allowed to put anyone to death," they evade the point. They wanted to shift the responsibility for the death of Jesus from their shoulders to the shoulders

of the Governor. It is perfectly plain that they dreaded the crowd. If Christ were put to death according to Jewish law, by sentence of the Sanhedrin, the people would hold the Sanhedrin responsible, not Pilate, whose formal leave to carry out the sentence involved him in little responsibility. In fact, his endorsement of a sentence of the Sanhedrin would be regarded as a gracious act on his part, strengthening the native tribunal in its just rights. The Sanhedrin, however, used its utmost endeavour to get Pilate to condemn Jesus as a political criminal, not as a religious fanatic; they meant Him to be put to death by Roman soldiery, not by the servants of the Sanhedrin. If, then, troubles should arise with the followers of the Galilean prophet, it would be Pilate who would be directly threatened, not the Jewish authorities. It was the old, old trick. It is an invidious and unpopular thing to condemn a man for his religious opinions, so you condemn him for high treason instead. Some people have seen in Pilate's remark: "Judge him according to your law," a sign of irony, as if he taunted the Sanhedrin with its powerlessness. But there is no reason for taking it in this sense.

So, then, to escape the odium of murdering a much-loved teacher, they brought him to Pilate for condemnation as a political criminal. Pilate, as Roman, had too much respect for legality, if not for justice, to do this straight away. With a question of Jewish religious law Pilate knows he is incompetent to deal. His consent is only required to ensure that legal formalities have been gone through, and that the accused has had fair play. If, however, they want him, as Governor, to condemn this man for some

political offence on *his* authority, then he must know the accusation and judge of his guilt. If the accused is guilty of a religious offence then he must be stoned, according to Jewish law; if the Romans put him to death for a civil or political crime his punishment must be crucifixion. The Jews seemed bent on having Christ crucified. "What accusation do you bring against this man?" asks Pilate. "If he were not a malefactor we would not have delivered him up to you," is the curt and angry answer. They do not say "blasphemer," but doer of mischief, a common criminal. They bring technically three charges: Christ was a disturber of the public peace; He taught the people to refuse the taxes; and, thirdly, He said He was Messias, the king.

The first item is certainly not endorsed by the Gospels. Though Christ uttered denunciations against Scribes and Pharisees, He carefully avoided giving rise to breaches of the peace. The second is a direct lie, for He had taught to give Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. The third is adroitly given an aspect which would rouse Pilate. In the Council-room of the Sanhedrin Our Lord had acknowledged that He was Christ, the Son of God, whom they would see on the clouds of heaven at His return. This is now changed into Messias the king, to give it a political aspect. This last point accordingly strikes Pilate most.

It is obvious that Pilate must have received previous reports from his own officials about the Galilean Prophet. Even Pilate's own wife had been deeply impressed by Jesus. It is likely that these two had discussed that meek and marvellous Preacher between themselves. There is no doubt that Pilate did

not hear of Jesus that morning for the first time. The first two items on the indictment he at once realized to be untrue, the last item might contain some truth. Only a week previously large numbers had received this Prophet into Jerusalem with cries of "Hosanna to the king," and He had not refused the title.

In Marcion's copy of St. Luke's Gospel (*c.* A.D. 140) there was the additional accusation, "destroying the law and the prophets, and turning our children and wives away from us." The gnostic tendency of this sentence is too patent not to make it suspect. It is true that a number of weeping women followed Jesus to the Cross and came to embalm His body, a number of children acclaimed Him on Palm Sunday, and His love for women and children is quite striking in the Gospels, but He said He came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil.

Pilate, having heard the accusation, beckons Jesus to follow him, that he may cross-question Him at ease in his own apartments. He begins by repeating the accusation: "So you then are the king of the Jews?"

It must have seemed absurd that this woebegone figure, with features swollen with the blows of the rabble, with face bedraggled with their spittle after the night in the house of Caiaphas, should claim to be king.

Jesus answered: "Do you say this of yourself?" Have you any reason to believe that I ever claimed temporal kingship, have your officers and officials reported to you about any attempts on My part to assume royal dignity? I have taught for three years in public, has Roman sovereignty ever been brought into danger by Me? "Or have others told you this

of Me?" Are you merely repeating the accusations of the Sanhedrin? In what sense do you ask about kingship—in your own Roman, political, sense, or in the Jewish scriptural sense, as the royalty of the Messias?

Pilate, conscious of his rank and race, says scornfully: "Am I a Jew? What do I know about Jewish Messianic dreams? Your people, and especially your priests, have delivered you up to me. What have you done?" What is this claim which has roused the hatred of your own people and the antagonism of your priests?

Christ acknowledges Pilate's right to know in what sense He claims to be king, and He answers: "My kingdom is not of this world; were my kingdom of this world, my servants would make armed resistance that I should not be delivered to the Jews, but now my kingdom is not of the world." The English does not quite do justice to the Greek here; Christ really said: My kingdom is not the outcome of the world, it has not the world as its source and origin; earthly kingdoms are built up by force; were I an earthly king I must have begun by gathering some armed followers, who would have protected me against the Jews, but you know I have none.

This draws our attention to the question: What language did Pilate and Christ speak to one another? That Pilate, during the few years of his governorship, should have troubled to learn enough Aramaic to examine a prisoner is not very likely. On the other hand there is no indication whatever that an interpreter was used, and the narrative makes it somewhat unlikely. There remains, then, the likelihood that Our Lord spoke Greek. The captain who arrested

St. Paul some twenty-five years later, on the steps of the Temple, was surprised when St. Paul addressed him in his own language, and said with astonishment: "Dost thou know Greek?" This, however, may have been due to the fact that he thought his prisoner to be a well-known Egyptian criminal, whose ignorance of Greek was notorious. If Galilean fishermen could have such thoroughly Greek names as Philip and Andrew, even humble folks in Palestine probably had some smattering of Greek. Greek was probably known in Palestine almost as well as English in Wales. Hence, in all likelihood, Jesus and Pilate spoke Greek. Some interpreter may have been present, or some officials, or perchance what passed between Pilate and Jesus has come to us through his wife Claudia, but by far the most natural thing would be if it came to us through the shorthand report of the acts of the trial. This cannot have failed in a Roman criminal case, and of this we have still many examples in the acts of Christian martyrs.

Pilate continued: But then, at least in some sense, You ARE a king?

Christ answered: "It is as you say; indeed I am. For this was I born, and for this did I come into the world, to give testimony to the truth!" A royal teacher, a royal Revealer and Bringer of truth, such am I. My kingship is over the realm of truth. I was born and entered into the world to be a divine Witness to truth.

Pilate replied: "What is truth?" It may have been a question thrown out carelessly by a superficial man of the world, a man of business, to whom truth is a phantom and the pursuance of it a folly. True there is something not unkind in the question, but

perhaps it was the feeble, flabby kindness of a man indifferent to every higher thought. Others see in it rather the impatient cry of a man, who had spent some time in considering the philosophical systems of his day, and had turned away in despair of finding the truth. If wise Greeks and Romans quarrelled, a Jew would not be likely to help him. Pilate, perhaps, took the view of his contemporary Plinius: Nothing is certain, except that nothing is certain, and nothing more wretched and nothing more proud than man!

Pilate hardly waits for the answer, in fact he expects none. He rises, and, with Christ, goes outside and says: "I find no cause in Him!" I can see nothing to condemn Him for. A kingdom of truth is no practical politics, and a king of truth no rival to Cæsar.

By this time quite a crowd had assembled outside with the members of the Sanhedrin, though it was still early morning. On hearing Pilate's answer they burst out in a torrent of angry invectives, and try in detail to vindicate their verdict: it is not only here in Judæa that this Jesus is dangerous; He is in Judæa but comparatively little, but He goes through all Palestine, with Galilee as his headquarters! "Beginning from Galilee," we read in St. Luke.

Pilate expected some defence by Jesus. He seems purposely to have brought Him in contact with His accusers, hoping that by listening to the altercation between accusers and accused he might gather some of the real points of their bitter grievance against this apparently harmless prophet. He must have watched Jesus closely for some time to see what He would say, how He would behave in face of the

infuriated mob. But Jesus was silent. Pilate actually tried to rouse Him. "Have You nothing to answer? Look of how many things they accuse You!" But not a word escaped the lips of the Prisoner, so that, say the Gospels, the Governor was very much astonished. Jesus—so, no doubt, argues Pilate—must understand that it means life or death to Him, yet He stands there in complete calm and self-possession, neither arguing with the priests nor pleading with Pilate, who had His life in his hands. Stoic contempt for death the Romans understood well enough, but clearly there was in Jesus something more than haughty disdain, and it must have been this which amazed Pilate so much. Christ's attitude, he realized, was not a mere pose, it was not mere stubbornness or defiance, something which is common enough in people who have their back to the wall. There was in this man a meek nobility and a grandeur of resignation which Pilate had never seen before, and which triumphed over his Roman contempt for the natives. He is at a loss how to act; when, therefore, he hears that Galilee is the headquarters of this prophet he sees a way out of the difficulty. He will send him to Herod. Herod is a Jew and will understand better what it is all about. Herod and Pilate are not on good terms. Still, it is well to use this opportunity of a *rapprochement*. Herod is in Jerusalem for the Passover. What easier than sending Christ across to the Hasmonaean palace? Thus Pilate will have rid himself of an awkward case.

To Herod, therefore, they go. Pilate took it for granted that Herod would finish the matter. Unfortunately Christ's silence before Herod put Herod in a difficult position, and Herod had found it convenient

to return compliment for compliment. Jesus was Herod's subject, but He was actually in Pilate's territory. Pilate was thanked for his scrupulous courtesy in his deference to Herod, no doubt, but Herod, equally courteous, says that Pilate has full right to judge Him.

The Jews are back at Pilate's door in probably less than an hour. Pilate hears the unwelcome din of the returning multitude, and the message comes that they wish to see him outside as they will not enter his house. Doubtlessly annoyed, he appears again. He sees a strange sight. The Prisoner is got up in a ludicrous fashion as a sort of theatre-king, with an old discarded mantle of faded glory over His shoulders. Pilate learns that Herod had done this, and that Herod only thinks him a fool, and leaves the case to Pilate to decide as he thinks fit. The very return of the highpriests and the magistrates and the mob shows that they are absolutely determined to get some sentence against Jesus out of him, and Pilate begins to think he had rather throw some sop to the crowd. He reviews the past process: "You brought me this man as a disturber of the peace, and you know how, having investigated the matter, I found no case against this man in the points on which you accused him. Neither did Herod, for I sent you to him, and clearly nothing worthy of death was brought up against him." The very dressing-up in this cloak shows that he looks upon him more as a farce than a danger. Very well, then, "I'll have him whipped, and then I shall let him go."

This proposal of Pilate's must not be mistaken for the actual scourging which Our Lord really underwent before His crucifixion. The Greek word used

by St. Luke is quite different from that used by all the Evangelists for the real scourging. It refers to that whipping which, in Roman law, was given to slaves who were guilty of offences for which the death penalty was considered too severe. It was not meant to do any permanent bodily harm or endanger life or limb, unlike the scourging before the crucifixion which was part of the actual death penalty. The real stress of Pilate's answer lies in the mention of dismissal. The proposed whipping is spoken of to pacify the mob somewhat. It is as if Pilate said: I dare say the prisoner is somehow an undesirable fellow, I'll see to it that he gets a thrashing he will not soon forget.

But the enemies of Christ are not satisfied with this proposal. They mean that He shall die by the Roman authorities; it is a judicial murder they want. Pilate objects. To give a troublesome native a whipping, whether guilty or not, did not mean much to Pilate, but the death penalty—no; Pilate was a Roman, and it was un-Roman to play with justice in this fashion. Thus it had come to a deadlock. This is the third time Pilate has determined to save Jesus. If he remains firm, Jesus will indeed be publicly whipped in Jerusalem, but in a few weeks He will be back in Galilee to defy the Jewish authorities. This must not be, think the highpriests and the scribes. The opportunity may never return. It is all or nothing for them.

But Pilate was not firm. Unexpectedly he saw another chance of compromise. The customary Jewish deputation arrived to ask for the release of a prisoner on account of the Passover festivities.

Such release as an act of grace at the desire of the

populace was not unknown to Roman custom. Josephus tells us that Albinus, on account of a festivity, released ten prisoners, or rather exchanged them for one scribe. Recently a Greek papyrus was found containing the report of an assize-court in which the Roman Governor of Egypt, Vegetus, grants a reprieve to a certain Phibion, guilty of manslaughter. He used the technical terms: "I grant you grace on account of the people." Pilate speaks of "your" custom, because the choice of Passover for this privilege is evidently Jewish. There seems to be an allusion to it in the tract *Pesachim*. Pilate, so often told by the home government to conform to native customs, had adopted it.

Pilate knew that Christ had many friends among humble folk, that He was immensely popular with the working classes. It was mainly the Jewish high-priesthood and a fanatical set of scribes that envied Jesus His popularity. Pilate will save Jesus by appealing to the crowd, who will surely vote in His favour. He will make matters doubly sure by giving them the choice between Jesus and a prisoner who was certainly not popular with the crowd. He thought of a certain Barabbas, a well-known highwayman, who had killed a man in the recent turmoil. He might be regarded by some as a hero for resisting Roman authority, but most people realized that he was a vulgar crook. Pilate, therefore, told them: "I give you the choice between Barabbas and this Jesus of Nazareth." He then prepared for the official sentence. The Roman judge always sat on a raised platform for the delivery of a sentence. This dais or platform was a matter of ritual importance in Roman jurisprudence. It was like the wig of our judges, or

the black cap before a death sentence. Now, Pilate gave judgment outside his house, and some sort of platform with a seat on it was placed in view of all the people. He sat down and waited for the verdict of the crowd.

Then occurred a strange incident. His wife sent a message: "Have nothing to do with this just man, for I suffered much to-day in a dream on account of Him." The Emperor Augustus would not allow Imperial Legates to take their wives with them in the provinces, but Tiberius had relaxed this regulation, and even Severus Caecina had not been able to carry his law against it. If it seem strange that a Roman Governor should be interfered with in his public life, we had better remember Appian's story of Cæsar's wife, Calpurnia, who in her sleep had seen her husband all covered with blood, and in consequence prevented him from appearing in public. Pilate seems to have lost time through this incident, perhaps he entered his apartments for a few moment to reassure her, or he wrote or dictated a message in reply. In any case he must have lost time. Meanwhile the chief priests and the elders persuaded the people to ask for Barabbas and to make Jesus away. When Pilate finally put the decisive question, the answer came back in a shout: "Barabbas!" Thus failed Pilate's fourth attempt.

Pilate is clearly taken aback by this unexpected choice. He cannot well go against this definite reply, Barabbas they must have, he continues almost feebly: "But what then do you wish me to do with Jesus, the so-called Messias?" Pilate hopes, perhaps, than in an access of good humour on account of the feast, the crowd may say: Release him also. But no;

back comes the cruel cry: "Crucify him." It is clearly crucifixion the priests worked for all along.

Pilate now almost pleads with the mob: "But what harm has he done? I find no cause of death in him, therefore I shall have him scourged and then release him." When they hear again of this proposal of merely scourging Jesus and then letting Him free, they renew their fury, and there is an incessant shouting of "Crucify him." It becomes the roar of a mob completely out of hand. Arguing is out of the question. Yet Pilate *will* not have the responsibility of the death sentence. He has, no doubt, a superstitious fear of pronouncing it since his wife's warning, hence he uses a simple symbolic act to signify his mind to the crowd, he washes his hands ceremoniously in public.

It is a little surprising that Pilate adopted this ritual. It was a Jewish and not a Roman custom. In Deuteronomy xxi., 6, 7, this symbolic action is made obligatory in case of a murder by a person unknown, in order to testify that one is not guilty of shedding blood. But Pilate had been five years Governor of Judea, and it is not an unnatural thing to suppose that he had learnt something of native ways and fashions, and knew of this public disclaimer of guilt as customary amongst them. Possibly the thing was suggested to him by the Jews themselves in despair of otherwise obtaining the sentence they so much coveted. Or again, his wife, who probably was, as the wife of the Governor Saturninus, a convert to Judaism, may have suggested it to him as a half magical remedy to avert sharing the actual guilt.

In any case the Governor goes through the public

ceremony, saying: "I am innocent of the blood of this just man, see ye to it." The crowd immediately grasp the bearing of the action and roars back: "His blood be upon us and upon our children." A real Jewish expression, and as the crowd contains the highpriests, the scribes and the elders, Israel's official representatives, it is a technical acceptance by the Jewish nation of this dread guilt. Barabbas is now released and Christ surrendered to the scourging which preceded crucifixion. There was no formal death sentence yet, only Pilate's weakness surrendered Christ to the ill-will of his accusers. This implied informally his assent to the ultimate penalty, still it was technically different.

This scourging was not the Jewish scourging, which consisted of only forty stripes save one, but the Roman *flagellatio*. In the Jewish scourging the culprit was lying flat, face downwards; in the Roman scourging he stood bent over a short column, to which he was bound. The number of strokes was in no way fixed, and it was administered, not with rods or laths, as in the Jewish punishment, but with a scourge of four leather thongs or chains, in which knots were made and sharp pieces of bone fixed. This scourging was probably administered quite publicly, right in front of the praetorium, not far from where the sentence was delivered, but not in presence of Pilate, who retired within. Usually four lictors, or here, no doubt, common soldiers, carried out the scourging. A dwarfed column was often a permanent feature in front of a praetorium.

When they had done their work they clothe Christ again in His garment and bring Him into some court within the barracks. They called some of their

comrades and begin their mockery and crowning of thorns. Pilate obviously has nothing to do with this. It proves a certain lack of discipline in the army. It must not be forgotten that, though technically Roman soldiers, they were local native levies, and with the exception of some officers there may not have been a single Roman among them. It is true they were not Jews, but Syrians, probably of a sort, and especially Samaritans, who were not sorry to mock a Jewish Messias. Knowing that they pleased the mob, and having the thing suggested to them by Herod's ludicrous mantle, they considered they had a free hand in the matter. None the less their lack of discipline was early a matter of surprise, and Origen says that such a scene was only possible in the early days of the Empire.

Pilate knew that unless he interfered, crucifixion would automatically follow the scourging. He decided to make another, a fifth, attempt to save Jesus. He sends an orderly to fetch the Prisoner, and they have the audacity to let Christ go as He is with the soldier's red cloak over His shoulders and the crown of thorns on His head. However angry he must have been at this breach of discipline and of disrespect to himself, Pilate decides to utilize the very distress of Christ to save Him. Pilate therefore goes out again and says: "I bring Him out to you that you may know that I find no cause in Him."

To understand Pilate's thought we must remember that scourging according to Roman law could be one of three things: *praeparatio ad crucem,* that is the first instalment of the death penalty by crucifixion; secondly, torture for the purpose of eliciting evidence; thirdly, a punishment by itself for lesser

offences. Pilate had originally suggested a mere whipping; when they rejected his offer he had attempted to make them choose Jesus instead of Barabbas. He had finally yielded to the uproar of "Crucify him, crucify him," and apparently surrendered Christ to death. Now he takes it for granted that the scourging Our Lord had received was really not meant as the *praeparatio ad crucem,* but either as the scourging originally suggested or a scourging perhaps to elicit evidence and make Christ break His silence.

He brings Christ out in order that they may know that he finds no cause in Him. He had a double hope. Some, no doubt, might be moved by the ghastly sight of Christ's mangled body and feel pity; others might, at least, seeing Christ's utter helplessness, realize that there was nothing whatever to fear from such a pretender to Messianic royalty. So Pilate pointed to Christ, saying: Behold the Man! Look at the man, what more punishment do you want? Why should you fear this poor fanatic?

Now, according to St. John, it is *not* the people who shouted back: "Crucify him," but the priests and their hangers-on, for such a translation of *hyperétai* is perhaps the best. The crowd is actually taken aback by the awful sight of Jesus after His scourging, and is silent for a moment. Pilate is now filled with disgust at such implacable hate, and in anger says: "Well, then, *you* take Him, and crucify Him, for I find no crime in Him." It is a mere expression of annoyance, not a formal act of the Governor. The people understand this, and now all reply: "We have a law, and according to that law

He has to die because He made Himself the Son of God."

At last the truth is told! Sham and pretence is done away with, the mask is down! It is no political offence, or claim to kingship; no disturbance of the masses; no extraordinary attack on Cæsar's taxes or the tranquillity of Cæsar's rule, it is an offence against *their* law. They mean: there is no chance of His release, He has to die in any case, by you or by us. Die He must, you may as well let the sentence stand.

But when Pilate heard these words he feared the more. A superstitious fear must have filled him ever since the message from his wife. What is possible in the twentieth century was possible in the first. There are people now who are ostentatiously indifferent to all religion and yet are upset because they sit thirteen at table, or spill the salt, or walk under a ladder. No one can have read Juvenal and think that the first century was different. Pagan mythology was full of demigods, or gods in human disguise. Now this Jesus was a strange, unearthly figure. Pilate had never seen anyone quite like Him. He felt overawed. This man made Himself, so Pilate heard, the Son of God! Again he goes within, taking Jesus with him and questions Him, saying: "Whence art Thou?" From what region above or below or beyond have you come? What is the meaning of your claim to be the Son of God? Jesus answered him not a word. Pilate's Roman pride felt the sting of that silence: Do you not speak to me, do you not understand that I have the power to crucify you or to release you?

"You would have no power against me whatever

unless it were given you from above. Therefore he that has delivered me up has the greater guilt," is the reply of Jesus.

Why "therefore"? and why has Caiaphas more guilt than Pilate? Because in the order of the divine Providence Pilate possessed that dread power over life and death, crucifixion or release. He only misused it out of cowardice. His sin therefore is less than the sin of those who out of sheer malice try to force him to yield to their hatred. Pilate's only mitigating circumstance was that he, owing to his position, had to choose between crucifixion or his own dismissal from office. The choice, however, was none of his, he would fain have escaped the dread alternative. He was caught in a vice, and the pressure of his official status was his only excuse. Caiaphas committed a sin of his own making and invention. Caiaphas sought out his sin, but sin pursued Pilate. "And thenceforward Pilate sought to release him."

"Thenceforward": there is almost a divine irony in the word. It was a solemn resolution never, never, whatever befall, to condemn this man, followed by a complete surrender a few moments afterwards! Pilate apparently once more appeared outside and told the crowd his resolution. The priests and scribes realize that they must make a last, a supreme effort. They virtually threaten Pilate with denunciation to the Emperor for constructive treason.

The character of the Emperor Tiberius is well-known from Tacitus and Suetonius. He was a hard, a gloomy, a suspicious man, especially during the latter part of his reign. Tacitus writes that "in those days the crime of constructive treason—this seems the

best translation for the Latin *crimen majestatis*—was of all accusations the greatest!" Suetonius says that about that time "the Praetor at Rome consulted Tiberius whether the sentences regarding constructive treason had to be enforced, and Tiberius replied that the laws had to be enforced, and he enforced them in a most atrocious way." And again, "Hardly a day passed without executions. Every informer found credence. Every crime was made a capital one, even the utterance of a few harmless words."

Pilate had already been denounced to Rome before, and the Emperor had sent him a sharp rebuke. Pilate could not risk another denunciation. The more so as the accusation would be one of neglect in putting down pretenders to royalty, the supreme crime in the eyes of the Imperial old man, aged 75!

"If you let this man go you are no friend of the Emperor, for whosoever makes himself king, opposes the Emperor"—so said the Jews.

"Your master in Rome will not view favourably your making light of his imperial dignity in letting this man go free, who sets up as a king in the provinces. Your conduct is a strange one for one who holds the title *amicus Cæsaris*." Possibly the words were spoken in sheer desperation, in the fear that Jesus after all was to escape them, but they hit the unfortunate Governor very hard.

Pilate had Jesus brought forth again, and makes his last attempt. In order to show how absurd their reference to "a man who makes himself king" really is, he makes Jesus sit down on some stone steps, in view of the people, facing Gabbatha-square, and says (it was on a Friday, about midday): Look at that king of yours! Look at the man, how ridiculous to

make him a rival to Cæsar! Seeing Jesus sitting on that stone seat, they shout back: Take him away, take him away. Crucify him! Pilate said in helpless annoyance: Shall I crucify your king? The priests, with shameless hypocrisy, cry in answer: "We have no king but Cæsar."

This description of the final scene is based on a translation of the Greek which, on the whole, seems the best. The word *Ekathisen* can mean both: he set and he sat. In the first case Pilate sets Jesus on the seat; in the second it is Pilate himself who sits down. Although the latter translation is the common one and has much in its favour, still the former seems more in keeping with the context, and has very early support.

After this hypocritical cry: "We have no king but Cæsar," Pilate realizes the full length to which the priests are prepared to go, and then, at last, Pilate delivered Jesus to them that He should be crucified.

Humbled and beaten Pilate turns away from the crowd and enters his palace. A month or so later a fisherman stood not far from there. He faced the multitude, and said: "Ye men of Israel, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob hath glorified His child Jesus, whom ye delivered up and denied before the face of Pilate, when he had determined to release him. Ye denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked a murderer to be granted unto you and killed the Prince of Life, whom God raised from the dead."

What Pilate thought when the news came that Jesus had risen from the dead, only the last day can reveal.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE CHURCH OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The fact that Christ disclaimed coming to found a Messianic kingdom in the political sense of the Jews, the fact that Christ emphasized that His religion was a religion of the Spirit and of the inward man, has led some careless or prepossessed readers of the New Testament to the erroneous conclusion that He did not intend to found a visible organisation on earth for the continuation of His work, that He did not intend to found an institution with rulers and ruled, governors and governed, with definite rites of admission, and duties and definite privileges of membership, with other words that He did not intend to found a Church.

That this is a serious historical error, the pages of the New Testament amply testify. Even if we did not have Christ's own explicit affirmation: I shall build my Church, the whole tenor of the Gospels shows that Christ from the beginning set out to form a religious Society, duly organized and formed for the express purpose of continuing both His teaching and His work for souls. He did not choose His followers at random, but deliberately chose twelve, whom He designated by the distinctive name of Apostles. To these He gave special powers, which He did not give to others. So striking was the privileged position of these Twelve, that all four evangelists have left us a

list of their names, and that on the death of Judas, by official action and by a direct appeal to divine intervention, his episcopate or overseership was assigned to Matthias. No historian can reasonably doubt that Jesus of Nazareth intended to confer on these Twelve chosen followers powers which should enable them to be real leaders in the religious community, which He started.

Plain to all and unmistakable are His words to them: "Whosoever listens to you, listens to Me; whosoever despises you, despises Me." "Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." "Do this in commemoration of Me." He breathed on them and said: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost, even as the Father has sent Me, I now send you, whose sins you shall remit, those are remitted them, whose sins you shall retain, those are retained." "To thee (the chief apostle) I shall give the keys of the kingdom of heaven and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." And to the same apostle: "Feed thou my sheep." "Be thou the shepherd of my sheep." "Feed thou my sheep." "To Me is given all power in heaven and upon earth, therefore go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all whatsoever I have commanded you. And I am with you always unto the consummation of the world." These words, which could be strengthened by others, make it surely plain that Christ carried out His plan of building a Church and that, not acting as the foolish builder of the

parable, who built on sand, He built on a rock, that the gates of hell should not prevail against it.

To disregard the Church was in Christ's eyes the supreme sin. "If thy brother sin, go show him his fault between thee and him alone . . . but if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more . . . and if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the Church, and if he refuse to hear the Church also, let him be unto thee as the heathen and the publican."

In consequence we cannot wonder that in the apostolic writings of the New Testament, brief though they are, the word "Church" occurs over one hundred times. In some instances indeed the word refers to the local organized community of the followers of Christ, when the word is accompanied with some designation of place, as "the Church at Corinth," "the Churches of Galatia," "the church at his house," and so on, but there remain some forty instances in which the word is used of the whole organization, or institution which Christ founded, the members of which were scattered throughout the world. No true historian can overlook these texts, if he wishes to understand the work of Christ, though unfortunately in many circles theological prejudices have long obscured both their meaning and value.

Let us look at some of them.

The Twelve Apostles soon began to delegate some authority to assistants, or deacons, who were to help them in the administration, especially of temporal matters. Soon after, apostolic missionaries travelled everywhere, and wheresoever they made converts they had ordained presbyters or bishops. Now, we read that St. Paul on one of his last missionary journeys came to the seaport of Miletus and sent thence to

Ephesus to call to him the presbyters of the Church, and when they were come he said to them: "Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops to be shepherds of the Church of God, which He purchased with His own blood." "I commend you to God and to His word of grace, which can build up and establish you as clergy among all them that are sanctified."

The expression "establish you as clergy" is no doubt a paraphrase rather than a literal translation, but there can be little doubt that it gives the real meaning. The Greek expression *didonai kleron* literally: to give a lot, or a share, is the technical term for to make clergy. In fact our word clergy and cleric is nothing else than a man who has received the *kleros,* his lot, or share. In this text *didonai kleronomian* cannot but be an allusion to their status as bishops or priests.

The same St. Paul, writing to his disciple Timothy, whom he had left as bishop or overseer in Ephesus, states that the purpose of his letter is "that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the House of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth."

The phrase: "the Church of God" occurs eight times. This text speaks of the *living* God in order to explain and emphasize the thought of the Church as unshaken pillar and firm ground of truth, because it is maintained by an ever living God, whose indwelling power makes it the infallible support of God's revealed truth. And no wonder, for according to St. Paul God had "set some in the Church apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then

miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, divers tongues," and according to him the members of the Church were "fellow-citizens with the Saints and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone." Christ having ascended into heaven, had sent down gifts unto men here on earth, some He gave to be "apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints unto the work of ministering unto the building up of the body of Christ." So that there existed: "one body, one spirit . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, and through all and in all."

The description of the Church as the body of Christ, living through the indwelling of God, of Christ and of the Spirit is elaborately worked out in the Epistle to the Ephesians, which reads as lyric poetry in honour of the divine character of the Christian Church. God the Father is there said to have "raised Christ from the dead and made him sit at His right hand and put all things in subjection under His feet and given him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." The Church is the πληρῶμα of Christ, the Greek word is very inadequately translated by "fulness," it is rather the "fulfilment, the completion, the full realization of Christ." Christ is portrayed as some immanent spirit or soul, which reaches complete selfhood by embodiment in, and manifestation through, the Church. The Church is described as the temple in which He dwells and the individual faithful are builded together as living stones for a habitation of

God in the Spirit. Unto principalities and powers was "made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God."

In this Epistle we meet the startling comparison—or at least the comparison would startle us had we not read the passage a thousand times and grown familiar with it—the daring metaphor comparing the intimacy of man and wife with the union of Christ with His Church. "Wives be subjects to your husbands," writes St. Paul, "as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ also is the head of the Church, being himself the Saviour of the body. But as the Church is subject to Christ so let wives also be subject to their husbands in everything. Husbands love your wives as Christ also loved the Church and delivered Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that He might present the Church to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. He that loves his wife loves himself . . . even as Christ also the Church, because we are members of His body. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and the twain shall become one flesh. The mystery is great: in regard, I mean, of Christ and of the Church."

In this remarkable passage the union of Christ with His Church is a union which approaches one of practical identity. The twain are as it were one flesh. The boldness of this astounding metaphor seems the outcome in the mind of St. Paul of what happened on the road to Damascus. St. Paul repeatedly describes his conduct before his conversion in the

words: "I persecuted the Church of God," yet on the road to Damascus Christ had appeared to him and said: "Why persecutest thou Me?" To persecute the Church and to persecute Christ was the same thing, for Christ and the Church are one. How natural on the lips of St. Paul came that great doxology or song of praise: To God "Who is able to do beyond all that we ask or think, unto Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen."

"Unto God be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus" is the hymn of the Apostolic Church. In the so-called Didache of the Apostles written in New Testament times or immediately after them, we read that the faithful prayed at the breaking of the bread: "even as this bread, once scattered (as grains of corn) upon the hills, was brought together, and became one, thus may Thy Church be brought together from the ends of the earth so as to be Thy Kingdom, for Thine is the glory, and the power through Jesus Christ throughout the ages." "Remember, Lord, Thy Church to save her from all evil and to perfect her in Thy love, and to bring her together from the four winds, her whom Thou hast hallowed unto Thy Kingdom, which Thou hast prepared for her, for Thine is the power and the glory throughout the ages."

Now this Church was evidently not the mere sum total of all the individuals, who claimed to have accepted the teachings of Christ, it was a body corporate, a far-flung organization indeed, still one organization, one absolute unity, governed by the Apostles, and by those the Holy Ghost had set to rule the Church of God.

When the Twelve, who were personally chosen by Christ in the Flesh, and Paul, who was chosen by Christ in person on the road to Damascus, had become aged men, they were clearly concerned with the government of the Church after their death. This is obvious in St. Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus, whom he bids to stir up within themselves the grace which was in them by the imposition of his hands. The same was in the mind of St. Peter. "The presbyters amongst you," writes St. Peter, "I exhort, who am a fellow-presbyter and a witness of the sufferings of Christ . . . be shepherds to the flock of God, which is amongst you, being bishops not of constraint, but willingly according unto God; nor yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind, neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall be manifested, ye shall receive the crown of glory."

These New Testament bishops or presbyters or shepherds or whatever name we choose to give to them, had to teach the faithful, and to baptize them, to lay hands on them and give them the Holy Ghost, to rule them, to carry on amongst them the rite of the breaking of the bread, to remit or to retain their sins, and, when any of the faithful were sick, these presbyters were to be sent for to anoint them with oil and pray over them and if they were in sin, their sins would thus be forgiven them. These shepherds were set by the Holy Ghost through prayer, fasting and imposition of hands and were to give an account to Christ Jesus, the chief bishop of souls. They had to admit and to exclude from the Christian body, and exclusion from this body was

the supreme punishment, a surrendering of their body to Satan that in the end their soul might be saved.

It is abundantly evident the first Christians formed a close corporation, a firm organization under absolute divinely guaranteed rulers and leaders. In the Acts of the Apostles we hear of a doctrinal and disciplinary dispute amongst the first Christians, when some people came from Jerusalem to Antioch pretending to come from the leaders in the Holy City, to whom, however, the apostles protested they gave no authority. Deputies were sent to Jerusalem, a meeting was convened, the matter was definitely settled and a letter sent, the wording of which betrays the consciousness of supreme and complete authority over the recipients in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia. In this letter the final decision is introduced with the solemn formula: it seems good to the Holy Ghost and unto us. The legislative authority here at work is described as "the apostles and the presbyters with the whole Church."

The word Church was a well-chosen and most significant word. It was a well-known legal term. *Ecclesia,* for that is the Greek word used, meant a legitimately convened and authoritative meeting or council. Most of the free cities of the Greek world had an *ecclesia* with the power to make enactments and appoint officials. The meaning of this word is plain from the story of Demetrius the silversmith at Ephesus, told in the New Testament itself. The turbulent faction in the town had rushed to the greatest hall or meeting-place in the city, the amphitheatre, having seized two of Paul's companions. There they continued a scene of wildest confusion

and shouted for about two hours: Great is Diana of the Ephesians. The *Ecclesia,* we read, was in confusion, till the town clerk finally quieted the multitude. "Diana of course it great," said he, "but ye ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. For ye have brought hither these men who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess. If, therefore, Demetrius and the craftsmen that are with him have a matter against any man, the courts are open, and there are the proconsuls, let them bring their mutual pleas. But if you seek something about other matters, it shall be settled in the regular *ecclesia.* For, indeed, we are in danger of being accused of riot about those day's proceedings, there being no cause for it and we shall not be able to give an account of this seditious meeting. And having said this, he dismissed the *ecclesia.*"

It is plain that this shrewd town-clerk knew that the Romans, who usually respected the civic liberties of ancient Greek cities, but who were great sticklers for law and order, might punish the town for holding an illegal *ecclesia,* which resembled a *systrophe* or a seditions meeting.

To make an *ecclesia* is in classical Greek the equivalent for the English "to make or constitute a House, when the Speaker is in the chair and the necessary members of Parliament are present. When in New Testament times the Christians spoke of being an *ecclesia,* in fact the *ecclesia* of the living God, which Christ had founded and bought by His blood, the use of the technical word *ecclesia* suggested to them not a collection of pious individuals saying their prayers and believing the same doctrines, it suggested infinitely more. It was God's institution, society and

organization endowed with divine authority, a state and a polity, in fact a *Civitas Dei,* spiritual indeed, but none the less real and visible, with laws and powers and rulers, as real as those of the *Imperium Romanum.*

If such was Christ's intention, people have argued, how is it that the word *ecclesia* is recorded on Christ's lips only on two occasions?

These two occasions are indeed so telling that they might suffice: "Upon this rock I will build my *ecclesia* and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," "If anyone hear not the *ecclesia,* let him be to you as a heathen and a publican," but though the word *ecclesia* is but rarely recorded on Christ's lips the thing for which it stands was always on Christ's lips under another term, which Palestinian Jews would more readily understand. Christ called it "the Kingdom of God," or if we use the Matthean phraseology "the Kingdom of Heaven." The Jews in Our Lord's day avoided the use of the word God and used "heaven" instead, just as we in English often say: "Heaven protect you," "May heaven grant," "Heaven forbid," etc. Our Lord seems to have conformed to this national custom. The word "kingdom" occurs some hundred and twenty times in the Four Gospels alone. Christ speaks of "My kingdom"; the Apostles speak to Him of "Thy kingdom"; even the thief on the Cross asks to be remembered when Christ comes into His kingdom; it is said to be the kingdom of the Son of Man as it is the kingdom of God or Heaven. When Gabriel announced the birth of the Child to Mary, His mother, he, echoing the words of the Old Testament Prophets, foretold that of His kingdom

there should be no end. Christ sends out His Apostles into every village of Gallilee to preach the gospel of the kingdom, and to His adversaries Christ said: "The Kingdom of God has come upon you," and all the parables of Christ (and without parables He did not speak unto them) are parables of the Kingdom of God. It is true to say that the Kingdom of God is not only the main, but practically the exclusive, theme of the Four Gospels.

Now in defiance of all historical sense and in defiance of the plain text of the Gospels, this kingdom is sometimes regarded as spiritual indeed and heavenly but not an objective, visible reality on earth. The text: "The Kingdom of God is within you," is quoted as if that settled once and for ever that this kingdom consisted merely in an inward disposition of soul, in virtue, and grace and righteousness which are invisible to the human eye and have nothing to do with the external organization of a kingdom apparent to the outward eye.

This text, torn out of its context, has, alas, become a shibboleth of a party instead of being calmly considered in its true historical bearing. In its context it obviously means not "within" you, but "amongst you"; the Messianic Kingdom is not an external force which was to be applied to Israel from without, but was to act as a leaven in Israel from within. The unbelieving Jews were gazing for some outward portent, as if the armies of the Messias were some day to come marching out of heaven or from the outermost parts of the earth to bring victory and glory to the people in Palestine, whereas in reality the kingdom was already right amongst them before they realized it. It had been working in Israel from with-

in, but they had not recognized it, because it had not come "with observation," it had come noiselessly and without the tramping of armies and the shouts of victory. "Within you," on Christ's lips, did not mean, "invisibly within your own souls by virtue and grace without any distinguishable outward signs and to the exclusion of outward manifestation," but it meant: within you, O people of Israel, right amongst you; already in many a hamlet and city, in many a home and family, in palace and hovel, that kingdom has been established. You are waiting, O Israel, for a kingdom to come, which has already come and exists to your right and to your left and all around you, it has taken root within Israel, but your eyes are blinded and you have not known the day of your visitation. The Revised Version with commendable honesty does print in the margin the translation "in the midst of you" instead of "within you."

That Christ's kingdom is spiritual and that its spirituality is invisible, is obvious. The purpose and end of that kingdom is the inward possession of the Divine gifts of Grace and Truth in the soul, and only those that possess these gifts are true citizens of that kingdom as Christ desires them to be, but this does not mean that Christ's kingdom cannot be an outward and visible society and commonwealth for the maintenance of Christ's teaching and atoning work in this world.

Some folk, misled by the sound of the words "kingdom of heaven," think that it can only refer to some blissful state hereafter, a heavenly kingdom and not a kingdom on earth. They, too, are apt to cling to a text that seems at first glance to support their

idea. My kingdom is not of this world, said Christ before Pilate. But a moment's reflection, a moment's look at the original text, dispels any erroneous conclusion. Christ did not say: "My kingdom is not in this world," but ἐκ τούτου τοῦ κόσμου, out of the world; from this world as its source and origin, it is not the outcome and growth of worldly forces. Had Christ's kingdom been begotten of this world and been the world's child, the world would have loved it and defended it in its hour of danger. It is surely a quaint aberration of mind that sees in the words "out of this world" the equivalent of "existing on this earth."

The more than one hundred texts in the Gospels about the Kingdom of God leave not the slightest doubt what Christ meant thereby. Its purpose was to produce in the human soul a state of inward virtue and holiness, its final consummation was to be in the life beyond where Christ and all the redeemed were to enter into the glory of God for ever, but it also had its present visible reality in a state and polity on earth over which Christ should reign and which would be administered in His name until He should return on the clouds of heaven in great glory and majesty.

There are scores of sayings of Christ to prove that this is so. The kingdom of heaven is like unto ten virgins, five of whom were foolish, five of whom were wise. The five foolish virgins were surely on earth and not in heaven, and even on earth their souls were without grace and virtue for their lamps had died out for lack of oil. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that catches good fishes and bad. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a field on which the enemy

sows tares as well as the sower sows good seed. The parables of the field and the net are explained by Christ Himself: "Now the field is this world" and the angels cast out the bad fish from the net at the end of this world. The kingdom of heaven is like a leaven, like a grain of mustard seed, like a woman, who had ten groats and lost one, like a banquet at which entered a man not having on a wedding garment. But why multiply examples which everyone knows? The parables portray a kingdom here upon earth, in which the good and the bad mingle together, though the kingdom is God's and Christ's, and has for sole purpose to render men holy and prepare them for life everlasting. The kingdom is Christ's net, or His field, or His house, or His banqueting hall, take whatever simile you choose, it is but another word for His Church on earth. He Himself once said to the Chief of the Twelve: Thou art a rockman, and upon this rock I will build my Church . . . and to thee I shall give the keys of the kingdom of heaven, whatsoever thou shalt loose *on earth,* shall be loosed in heaven, whatsoever thou shalt bind *on earth* shall be bound in heaven.

Christ's "kingdom of heaven" is His Church on earth, though the outward organisation on earth does not exhaust all its glory. Though its whole existence on earth is for its eternal continuance hereafter, none the less the Church on earth belongs to its very essence and intrinsic being, unless we make the New Testament idle and void of all meaning for the sake of a theological theory unknown till the sixteenth century. As historians we have to deal not with *a priori* considerations regarding what some people think the Founder of Christianity *ought* to have done

—for some hold it a mean thing that Christ should have died for a Church, for an ecclesiastical organization as they would style it—as historians we have to deal with what Christ *has* done. He has founded a Church and meant it to be His kingdom, a kingdom indefectible and universal. "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." "Go, teach, baptize, make disciples, make them observe whatsoever I have commanded you, and, lo, I shall be with you always." "Be of good cheer, little ones, I have overcome the world." He made it universal. "Teach ye all nations," "preach the Gospel to every creature." "In Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither Greek nor barbarian."

As old as Christianity is the "Catholic Church," for Catholic is but the common Greek word for "Universal." The assertion that at some time or other in the past the Old Church of Christ failed and that ever since national and local freewill associations of Christians, man-made institutions, denominations or "*churches*" (in the plural) have taken the place of the institution and organization founded by Christ, may be an easy and attractive theory to the modern mind, but it has no root in history and is the complete denial of the truth of the New Testament.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE PRIESTS OF THE NEW LAW

It is often said that the New Testament knows nothing of Christian priests. One is triumphantly told to search the New Testament, search it well, one will never find from cover to cover any mention of a Christian priesthood except that common to all the faithful.

Now if it be meant that the Greek word *hiereus* is never applied to Christian ministers, this is perfectly true, but the inference that therefore Christian ministers can exercise no sacrificial functions is false. Greek-speaking Christians undoubtedly called their ministers, elders (*presbyteroi*) and overseers (*episcopoi*), not *hiereis,* but it remains to be seen whether they did so to exclude the idea of sacrificial functions. We submit that they had other reasons.

Firstly. The word *hiereus,* etymologically considered, does not express the idea of sacrificing. Whatever its original derivation, the idea of slaying and offering a victim is not contained therein. The adjective *hieros* means vigorous, mighty, glorious, splendid, divine, sacred, hallowed, holy. A *hiereus* is a man, who deals with divine, sacred, hallowed or holy things, or who makes things divine, sacred, hallowed or holy. No doubt the word was applied throughout the Greek world to people who slew victims to the gods, but its fundamental meaning was

much wider. Common parlance often makes strange applications; in English we call a student or an expert in theology "a divine," and one who tells present or future secrets "a diviner." To the ordinary Greek ear *hiereus* must have sounded somewhat like our "holy man," a man not necessarily personally holy, but one who deals in holy things. This is a very usual way to designate the functionaries of a religion, and is used in a great number of languages.

The Greeks had a definite set of words which technically referred to the slaying of victims such as *thysiasterion* (altar), *thysia* (sacrifice), *thyma* (victim), *thystas* (a sacrificer), *thymele* (a place for sacrifice)—all these from *thyo,* to slay in sacrifice. We shall see that *thysiasterion* is once at least used of the Christian altar according to the obvious meaning of the text. If, then, Christians set aside the word *hiereus,* it is not because it directly conveyed to them the idea of sacrifice.

Secondly. The term *hiereis* was applied to an existing, omnipresent and prominent class of men in the Greco-Roman world, the priests of the Jews and the priests of the pagan cults. What wonder that the Christian community avoided this technical title for designating the ministers of the religion of Christ, a religion so startlingly different from all religions around them!

A simple example will suffice. In England, if we overhear a conversation in which people speak of "our vicar," "our clergyman," "our minister," we at once conclude that the speakers are Protestants. We avoid these words, not because they contain anything which we object to on theological grounds—many priests are vicars, all priests are clergymen and

ministers of religion—we avoid these words because their usage has been so long associated with Protestant officials that the words themselves savour of Protestantism. We prefer another title for the ministers of our religion, simply because we realize that our religion is so different from Protestantism. There is no proof whatever that there was in the mind of the early Christians the theological purpose to exclude the idea of sacrifice in their choice of their own terms. They naturally coined a distinctive designation for their own officials.

At first they hesitated between "overseers" and "seniors"; thus St. Paul called the "seniors" of Ephesus to Miletus and addressing them said: "The Holy Ghost hath placed you as overseers to rule the Church of God." It seems from the New Testament that the idea of authority was the most prominent notion in their minds when they thought of their officials. In the world around them "priests" were mostly people only required on ceremonial occasions to perform certain rites, but people usually with no authority whatever.

Christian ministers were so different. They had divine authority to rule, derived from the Holy Ghost. They were the "shepherds" of the people. They taught in the name of Christ and whosoever listened to them listened to Him. They anointed the sick and healed them. They forgave sins in baptism first and afterwards by judicial sentence. It is true that they sacrificed also, but what more natural than that the first Christian community should spontaneously use a wide term such as "senior," "overseer"? They had to coin a new term for a new thing.

Thirdly. Even the sacrificial power which their

leaders possessed, and which was the root of all their other powers, was in so many respects different from that of Jewish or pagan priests. The Sacrifice they offered was the Body and Blood of Christ, invisibly present under sacramental veils upon an unbloody altar. The act of sacrifice was one performed by the sword of the words of consecration, not the material sword slaying a common victim. And again they were only sacrificers in a secondary sense, *the* Sacrificer even in the Mass was Jesus Christ Himself, a living victim, both priest and oblation at the same time.

The Christian priests were such in a unique sense. They were sacrificers indeed, but only as representatives of the One Great High Priest, offering a Victim, indeed of infinite worth, but a living Victim, which offered itself in sacrifice. This sacrifice was a mystic renewal and representation of the Sacrifice of Calvary. Had they chosen the term *hiereus* it would have brought before their mind the common and somewhat degrading associations of the non-Christian priesthoods around them. It is only natural that they should have chosen a wide term, which had no unpleasant and misleading connotations.

Twice in the Apocalypse of St. John (i., 5; v., 10) it is said of all the faithful that God made them "a kingdom and priests" (*hiereis*), a clear reminiscence of Exodus xix., 6, where it is said: "If ye keep my covenant ye shall be a priestly kingdom (in Hebrew a kingdom [of] priests) and a holy nation." Once, in Apoc. xx., 6, it is said of those of the first resurrection "they shall be priests of God and of Christ" (an illusion to Isaias lxi., 6). When Catholics assert that their priests are really such, Protestants answer

that according to the Scriptures *all* the faithful are priests, and much is made of this common priesthood. But surely Protestants are here faced with a dilemma: in these texts the priesthood is either metaphorical or real. If it be real, then, according to their ideas, *horribile dictu,* not merely a few thousand Catholic clergy, but countless millions of Christians are all *real* priests, which must in their eyes be an utter derogation of the sole priesthood of Christ and the all-sufficiency of the historic Sacrifice on Calvary. If, however, the priesthood of these texts is only a metaphorical one, these texts are of no avail in a discussion with Catholics. For those who claim that a small limited number of men are real priests, cannot be refuted by saying that there are millions of metaphorical ones. St. John himself seems to explain the meaning by adding "a holy nation," as in Exodus. As a priest is a man, sacred and dedicated to God and set apart for His service, so Israel of the Old Covenant and of the New shall be a priestly people. With regard to the Old Israel it certainly did not mean that all Jews were in a technical sense real priests—only the descendants of Aaron were—why, then, should it not be so with regard to Israel of the New Covenant?

The seniors or overseers of the New Testament certainly had the right to celebrate the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist. Now, if we can show that the text of the New Testament suggests that the Eucharist is a sacrifice, we have thereby shown that those who have the right to celebrate it are sacrificing priests.

The Lord's Supper was not merely a partaking of a banquet, but had a sacrificial aspect; this is clearly

shown from the text of the Institution itself. The Lord did not merely say: "take and eat: this is My Body, drink ye all of this, this is My Blood," but: "this is My Body which is *being given for you,*" and, according to many codices of the 1 Corinthians, "which is *being broken for you;* this is My Blood of the New Covenant, which is *being poured out for you* and for many unto remission of sins."

There can be no doubt that the participles *didomenon, klomenon, ekxunomenon,* are in the present. Although the Latin has *effundetur* (future) instead of *effunditur* (present), it has correctly *pro vobis datur* (present), both in St. Luke and 1 Corinthians. The Authorised and Revised English Versions correctly give the present. The very text of the Institution itself therefore suggests that there was some actual giving or offering of the Body, some actual offering of the Blood, however mysterious this may be, during the Supper itself.

To refer all this to the future giving of the Body and the shedding of the Blood on Calvary is to read into the text what is not there. If the reading *klomenon,* "being broken," of 1 Corinthians is correct, it cannot possibly refer to the future Sacrifice on Calvary, for it is most emphatically pointed out in the Gospels, that the Body was *not* broken on the Cross. Even if it be not the original reading, it goes back to times not far from those of St. Paul, and is the earliest commentary we have.

Besides the present tense of the participles, note the emphasis on the words "for you," "for many," "unto remission of sins." The Lord's Supper had some immediate connection with forgiveness of sins, it was in some sense clearly a propitiatory act, not a

mere banquet of spiritual enjoyment. It was "for you" and "for many." The Greek preposition *hyper* has not the very vague and wide meaning of the English *for;* it means "for your sakes," "on account of you," rather than "for your benefit." Take this, this is for you (it is meant for you) would be a very feeble expression and would not be thus expressed in Greek. Forgiveness of sins and atonement are suggested.

Most of all note the words: "This is My Blood *of* the New Covenant." The reference to Moses' establishment of the Old Covenant in Exod. xxiv., 4-8, is unmistakable. This is the text: "Moses, rising in the morning, built an altar at the foot of the mount, and twelve titles according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, and they offered holocausts and sacrificed peace-offerings of calves to the Lord. Then Moses took half of the blood and put it into bowls: and the rest he poured upon the altar. And taking the book of the covenant, he read it in the hearing of the people: and they said: All things that the Lord hath spoken we will do, we will be obedient. And he took the blood and sprinkled it upon the people and he said: This is the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." The Epistle to the Hebrews (ix., 18-22) shows how vital the sealing of a covenant by the shedding of sacrificial blood seemed in the eyes of Jews.

Our Lord, by using the words, "This is My Blood of the New Covenant," forcibly brought to the minds of His apostles the thought of Himself as slain, as a victim, whose Blood was the seal of the

New and Eternal Covenant. Why did He use such words, if His action had no sacrificial import, or was mere idle and highly cryptic pageantry of a sacrifice to come? The mere partaking of a banquet, of bread and wine, if it be in itself only a festal meal and nothing more, is not a very obvious portrayal of death upon a cross. If, however, we grant that Christ's Body and Blood were really present under the Sacramental forms and that that very change, that voluntary presence under such humble forms, was an act of oblation and self-offering to His Heavenly Father for many unto remission of sins, His words gain a depth of meaning which they cannot otherwise possess.

Apart from the words of the Institution the New Testament suggests that the Eucharist was not only a Sacrament but a Sacrifice.

In 1 Cor. x., 14-21, the idea that to partake of the Eucharist is to partake of a sacrifice is plainly visible. Christians are told not to partake of meat of pagan victims, not only not during the pagan sacrificial rites—that was obvious—but not even if the meat was put up publicly for sale, *if their attention was expressly called to the fact* that it had been sacrificed to the gods. To eat of a victim, which is formally acknowledged as having been offered in sacrifice, is to share in that sacrifice. That is true of us, Christians; it is true of the Jewish sacrifices; it is true of those of the heathen. Now, the things which the heathens sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and says St. Paul: "I would not that you should be made partakers with devils. You cannot drink the chalice of the Lord and the chalice of devils, you cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord and the table of

devils." Take away from this passage the supposition that the Eucharist is a sacrifice and it loses coherence and meaning.

There is another passage which suggests the Eucharist as a sacrifice, Hebrews xiii., 10. We (Christians) have an altar (*thysiasterion*), whereof they have no power to eat, who serve the (Jewish) tabernacle. It is true that the reference to the Eucharist can here be set aside and the passage referred to the Sacrifice of the Cross, because of the following context, but the reference to the Eucharist remains the more obvious and natural. "It is best that the (our) heart be strengthened by grace [*charis:* thanksgiving, *eucharistia*], not with (Jewish) foods, which have not profited those that walk by them. We (Christians) have an altar," etc. To eat of the Sacrifice of the Cross would be a very harsh metaphor, and there would still remain the question, when does a Christian eat of the Sacrifice of the Cross except in the Eucharist?

We conclude that when Our Lord said to His apostles: "do this as a memorial of Me," He constituted them in some sense sacrificing priests, or ministers of a sacrifice.

This is supported by the sacrificial meaning of the word *poieite,* which in the text is used for "do" this. Liddell and Scott, the most authoritative Greek dictionary in English, writes of this verb: "In Alexandrian Greek, to *sacrifice,* like Latin, *facere.*" It quotes the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, in two places, Job 42, 8 ,and 3 Kings, ii., 33. Surely the Greek of the Septuagint is the best possible key to the Greek of the New Testament. Moreover, the sacrificial meaning of *poiein* is found

frequently in the Greek Fathers. It seems therefore to be a Hellenistic use of the word, and Catholics have a perfect right to point to the probable inclusion of the sacrificial idea in the common use of the word at the time and in circles in which the New Testament was written.

There remains what is probably the greatest obstacle to the acceptance of priests in the New Testament, the apparent teaching in Chapters vii.-x. of the Epistle to the Hebrews. I mean such, at first sight, obvious texts as: "Once in the end of the world hath [Christ] appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself"; "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many"; "we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all"; "This man after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever sat down on the right hand of God"; "by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

The one sacrifice is obviously that of the Cross, how could the Sacrifice of the Mass be more emphatically excluded?

Indeed, if St. Paul had the Catholic doctrine of the Mass in his mind, then these passages would be very formidable, but St. Paul wrote not against Catholics but against Jews. What is the purpose of the whole Epistle to the Hebrews but to wean the weaker brethren amongst Jewish converts from their adherence to the Jewish sacrificial system? Christ has once for all done away with the need of Jewish victims and Jewish priests—in fact He has done away with all sacrifices except His own. St. Paul's first readers were under the unfortunate misapprehension that there was need for more victims and more sacri-

fices to supplement the supposed insufficiency of Christ's Sacrifice. Catholics look upon such a thought with utmost horror, they are as convinced as St. Paul was of the all-sufficiency of the Sacrifice of the Cross. The attempt to offer another victim or to establish a priesthood other than that of Christ would be, in their eyes, sacrilegious folly. They claim that the Mass is an act of Christ Himself, by which He applies the fruit of the One and Only Sacrifice to the souls of men.

The Catholic priesthood is not a priesthood additional to that of Christ, it *is* the priesthood of Christ carried out by the ministry of men. The Catholic altar is not an altar added to the altar of the Cross, for these two cannot be added up, as the second is only the application of the first. There is but *one* victim, Christ, but *one* priest, Christ, and the Mass is but a sacrificial representation, and application of the Sacrifice on Calvary. To use words directed against Jews under other circumstances, harbouring totally different thoughts, and to turn such words against Catholics, is to wrest the Scriptures from their proper meaning. Christ died for sins once for all; there is no need whatever to repeat that death and that Sacrifice to placate the Father or to obtain further remission of sins. Golgotha is sufficient for the pardon of all sin committed in this world from its creation to its doom, and for that matter, in all possible worlds.

But this pardon must somehow be applied to our individual souls. Protestants allow that it is possible that some souls will be lost. But a soul that is lost is one to whom, as a matter of fact, that pardon is not applied and that completely through his own

fault. The all-sufficiency of Calvary does not imply that all men ever since have their sins forgiven automatically and cannot but go to heaven. However all-sufficient the merits of Calvary, they need to be applied to the individual.

An illustration must suffice. Supposing a poor cancer patient read about an all-sufficient remedy for that dread disease, but on reading further that a number of hospitals had been erected and a staff of doctors appointed to apply this remedy, scornfully remarked: "If the remedy is all-sufficient, there can be no need of hospitals and doctors!" would we not think that patient was speaking in delirium? Would it not be correct to speak of the doctor who invented the all-sufficient remedy as having "once for all" done away with the necessity of death through cancer, even though we are eager to appoint as many doctors as possible to apply this unique remedy?

Catholics see in the Mass Christ's own never-ending activity in applying the fruits of Calvary to the children of men. They see in the Mass not merely a bare representation, but an everlasting application, of the death on Golgotha; but the act of applying these all-sufficient merits of His Blood is itself a sacrifice, an offering to His Father Almighty of His Body and Blood in the very change from their glorious existence in heaven to their lowly existence under the sacramental forms on earth. The separate consecration of the Bread as the Body and the Wine as the Blood portrays the shedding of His Blood and His death on Good Friday.

Perhaps it will be objected that St. Paul, in the Epistle of the Hebrews tells us that Christ, after the

one historic sacrifice on Calvary, sat down at the right hand of God and had no need to offer daily as the Jewish priests.

This is true, but St. Paul also said (Rom. viii., 34): "Christ died, yea, rather, He is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also *maketh intercession for us.*" And in the Epistle to the Hebrews itself (vii., 24-25) we read: "He, because He continueth for ever hath an unchangeable priesthood, wherefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to *make intercession for them.*"

Christ therefore did not sit down at the right hand of His Father in the sense that He for ever afterwards abstained from all the functions of His priesthood, resting satisfied with the one historic occasion when He exercised it. Christ, who had ascended to the right hand of God, is not idling eternity away in the mere reminiscence of His own past action, but ever living, that is, energizing, working, pleading, to make intercession for us.

This continual intercessory life is a continuous offering of the Victim slain and the Blood shed on Calvary, not indeed by a series of new Sacrifices, but by a never-ending pleading of the Old.

Christ's Sacrifice ultimately consists in an act of His adorable Will, offering His Body and Blood to His Father. This Will accompanies, and is expressed by, the change of bread and wine into that very Body and Blood; what else, then, is the Mass but the sacrificial act of Christ making everlasting intercession by applying the merits of the Cross to our souls?

There are two ways in which Christ's Sacrifice on

Calvary can be considered as "complete and consummated once for all." A wrong way and a right way. The wrong way is to consider it as an historical fact, over and gone, complete in the sense that nothing remains of it, except, of course, the judicial status of men, who are a race that has been, on one historical occasion, redeemed and atoned for. The sacrifice—in this view—*was*, but *is* no more. It *was* for three hours, two thousand years ago on Golgotha, but has long since ceased to be; the priest, who offered it, rests and has rested for twenty centuries from his arduous task. The right way is to consider Christ's oblation of Himself as an everlasting sacrifice. A sacrifice remains in being as long as the Victim lasts, as long as the priest offers, as long as God accepts. In these three ways Christ's Sacrifice never passes away. The pain and agony of Calvary is gone, the cruel slaying of the Victim by the soldiery on Golgotha is over, but these things were not of the essence of the Sacrifice. The being slain by evil men only became a Sacrifice by Christ's willing offering of His human nature in atonement for our sins, and by the Father's acceptance of that offering. The Victim lasts, for the Blessed in heaven ever adore the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. Christ has entered in the Holy of Holies and He never ceases to sprinkle the Blood of the Sacrifice upon the mercy-seat of God. The divine acceptance of the Victim is eternal, for God never changeth, He does not begin or cease His actions in the sequence of created time. God is above and beyond history. For God, Calvary is always; for God has neither past nor future; and God signifies His acceptance by the glorification of the Victim,

once in agony on Golgotha. Now in the Mass there is this Living Victim, who of His own free will places Himself in the hands of the priests of the Church on earth that they should offer Him as the One and Only Sacrifice for sins. Thus earth shares in heaven, thus the Mass is a true propitiatory Sacrifice, for it is the oblation of the Everlasting Victim.

The Sacrifice of the Mass is the way in which God doth keep His solemn oath to Christ, for God has sworn and He doth not repent: "Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedek." As to the human priests, who celebrate Mass, they are but the instruments in the hands of the Great High Priest, by which He fulfils for ever His never-ending priesthood.

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